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Newsletter

May 2026



Welcome to our May Early Years Stronger Practice Hub

Newsletter

New Early Years Learning Lead Opportunities

Coming **September 2026**

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).

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

As an Early Years Learning Lead, you will facilitate high-quality Department for Education (DfE) approved Continual Professional Development (CPD) for practitioners, provide specialist subject support to Early Years settings, and engage in regional and national networking with fellow professionals. Your expertise and passion will be instrumental in driving excellence and innovation across the sector.

[Early Years Learning Lead Application Pack](#)

- [Communication and Language Lead](#) (4 days per week): Promote language-rich environments, develop practitioner knowledge and support communication development for all children.
- [Mathematics Lead](#) (3 days per week): Champion mathematical learning and development, supporting practitioners to embed numeracy and spatial reasoning in everyday practice.
- [Personal, Social and Emotional Lead](#) (PSED 2 days per week): Lead initiatives which support practitioners to foster children's emotional wellbeing, social skills and resilience within Early Years settings.

These roles will be contracted by the Stronger Practice Hub (SPH) with an allocated day rate of £500/day and are funded up until March 2028 in the first instance, with the possibility of contracts being

extended dependent on funding. All roles are for 38 weeks of the year (term-time) and can be undertaken in one of two ways:

- Being paid directly as a self-employed contractor / consultant or
- By agreed release from your existing role, with payment be made to your setting for your release

These newly created roles offer an opportunity for experienced early years professionals to influence practice, support continuous improvement, and work collaboratively with settings across their local area. Click on the links below if you wish to apply for any of the roles.

Closing date: Monday 1st June 2026, 12 noon

Shortlisting and notification of invite to interview: Tuesday 9th June 2026

Interviews will be held on: Tuesday 16th and Wednesday 17th June 2026.

To apply, please complete the EOI, and email it to:

SpHubNW@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk

May 2026 issue

Welcome, Math's Champion, Early Years and SEND Professional Development Network, EYFS Leadership Network, (STEM) Learning Walk, SEND reforms, The Education Endowment Foundation, Early Years Insights, Help grow the early years evidence base – join an EEF trial, Supertato Inspires a Week of Creative and Mathematical Learning, Dfe Safer sleep, Starting Reception, Listening to Children Listening to Trees, New screen time guidance, Childminder Network Padlet, 'Let's Talk' Childminding Network, CPD Recorded Sessions, CBeebies Parenting, Updates.



Fully funded places now available



Worth £1205 the
Maths Champions
programme is **FREE** for
nurseries in England

**Secure your funded
place today!**



Information Sessions

For further details on Maths Champions access the Information Sessions led by a team of expert Early Years Advisors. These sessions 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. Book a session to find out more.

<https://ndna.org.uk/maths-champions-information-sessions/>

Don't forget to join our Leadership Network online:

These will be held as termly events on Workplace **Zoom**

3.45pm – 4.30pm

Meeting ID: 881 3994 7902

Passcode: 005369

The same ID and passcode for each term.

Tuesday June 2nd 2026

Tuesday 6th October

Tuesday 12th January 2027

We also have a SEND/Early Years Network:

These will be held as termly events on Workplace **Zoom**

6.00-7.00pm

Meeting ID: 874 2439 5942

Passcode: 774607

The same ID and passcode for each term.

Thursday 4th June

Thursday 1st October

Thursday 14th January 2027

Please contact sphubnw@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk to book place.



Early Years and SEND Professional Development Network



Liverpool City Region and Beyond Stronger Practice Hub are offering 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 on Zoom at
6.00-7.00pm

Meeting ID: 874 2439 5942
Passcode: 774607

- Thursday June 4th
- Thursday October 1st
- Thursday January 14th 2027



EYFS Leadership Network

Liverpool City Region and Beyond Stronger Practice Hub are offering 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 on Zoom at
3.45pm – 4.30pm

Meeting ID: 881 3994 7902
Passcode: 005369

- Tuesday June 2nd
- Tuesday October 6th
- Tuesday January 12th 2027

**Childminder 'Let's Talk' Monthly meeting - 2nd Saturday of
Every Month 10am – 11am**

Topics include:

- EYFS
- Nutrition: Safer eating
- Inspections
- Communication and Language
- Safer recruitment - assistants
- Supervision
- SEND
- Mathematics

Meeting ID: 873 2451 0704

Passcode: 506194



East Prescott Road Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Learning Walk

Liverpool City Region and Beyond Early Years Stronger Practice Hub
have the following CPD opportunity on offer:

Tuesday 19th May 2026 9.15a.m. – 11a.m.

East Prescott Road Nursery School
86 East Prescott Road, Knotty Ash, Liverpool, L14 1PW



Learning walk aims and outcomes:

This session will focus on the importance of creating an environment that promotes Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) opportunities for young children. It will also cover how you, as early years educators, could embed STEM in your environment, interactions and through the experiences you provide every day.

At East Prescott Road Nursery you will see:

- How the team have developed their environment so that it invites children in to investigate and experiment.
- How the role of the adult supports children's development in STEM through high quality interactions.
- How East Prescott Road Nursery School sparks children's creativity through STEM.

Please contact sphubNW@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk to reserve your funded place.



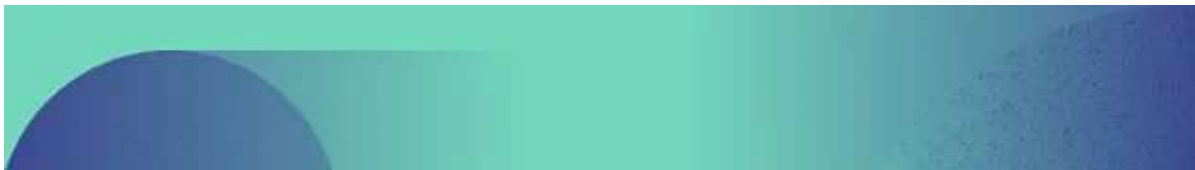
Ambition Institute supports the Department for Education in delivering the Early Years Stronger Practice Hubs programme as part of the government's Best Start in Life strategy to provide high-quality early education and childcare.

On Monday 23rd February, the Department for Education's Secretary of State published the Schools White Paper: [Every Child Achieving and Thriving](#) alongside a consultation on [SEND reform \(Putting Children and Young People First\)](#). There has also been a [series of guidance documents published](#).

Get involved by accessing the consultation at: [SEND reform: putting children and young people first - Department for Education - Citizen Space](#) and to take part with events that will be taking place throughout the consultation period. Please share consultation link with Parents.

Please note the SEND Reform and Early Years webinar has been pushed back to Wednesday 22nd April

You can find further details and sign up via [Eventbrite](#).



Early Years Insights

Inside this issue:

- Be inspired to improve your Early Years Pupil Premium strategy
- Explore new research, guidance, and planning tools
- Browse our Promising Programmes

Making the most of Early Years Pupil Premium funding

Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) funding has increased by 15% to £1.15 per hour in 2026–27. That's equivalent to up to £655 per eligible child per year.

How can you make the most of it? Our resources in this special issue can help.

Educators' success stories

[Improving children's language outcomes with the Early Years Pupil Premium](#)

- Andrina Flinders describes how investing in staff development and targeted language support helped narrow the attainment gap for disadvantaged children.

[Why strategy is more important than resources when using the Early Years Pupil Premium to close learning gaps](#)

- Nicola Cherry shares how a group of nurseries worked together to strengthen their EYPP strategies.

[How investing our Early Years Pupil Premium in staff training boosted children's outcomes](#)

- Headteacher Gemma Sutter explains how a focus on communication and language is improving outcomes for children from lower-income backgrounds.

A four-step planning tool for better spending choices

This planning tool introduces key findings from high-quality research to help you reduce the learning gap between children from lower-income backgrounds and others.

The four-page resource guides you through how to be more strategic and make your plans stick.

[Download the planning tool](#)

[Understand current practice](#)

How are early years settings using Early Years Pupil Premium funding - and what challenges are they facing?

Our report with IFF Research draws on input from over 500 early years leaders (including nurseries, school-based provision, and childminders) to explore current approaches to using EYPP.

What did we find?

- Most settings are aware of EYPP—but some eligible children may still be missing out
- Funding is often used to meet immediate needs, even where there's a desire to take a more strategic approach

[Explore the full practice review](#)

Invest in a Promising Programme

When thinking about how to use EYPP effectively, one of the strongest options is to invest in programmes with evidence of impact on children's outcomes.

Our Promising Programmes are a good place to start. These interventions have been independently evaluated and show promise for raising attainment.

Our current Promising Programmes for children under 4 include:

- Maths Champions: Builds the knowledge of nursery educators to support children's early mathematical development across their setting.
- Concept Cat: A whole-class approach to help children learn early verbal concepts (like empty, long, hard) through fun group sessions, followed by reinforcement in play - with the help of a friendly toy cat.

[Explore the resource](#)

Other opportunities

Reception classes: benefit from a funded Promising Programme

The Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI) is a structured, evidence-based programme designed to support children aged four and five with the weakest language skills.

Delivered by trained staff through short, targeted sessions, NELI

focuses on building vocabulary, listening and narrative skills.

NELI is an EEF Promising Programme, with robust evaluations showing children can make around three to four months of additional progress in language. Importantly, the impact is even greater for disadvantaged children.

And now through support from the Department for Education, eligible schools can currently access a funded NELI offer. This includes training, resources and an assessment tool.

[Find out more](#)

Sign up for a research trial or pilot

Our research projects explore what works to improve outcomes for children. By taking part, you can help build our knowledge about what's really effective.

For early settings with children aged three and four:

- [Talk with Tales for Children](#): a professional development programme that aims to improve language interactions and language development by improving interactions during storytime.
- [Positive Early Childhood Education](#): a professional development programme focused on 22 practical strategies that aim to improve self-regulation and support positive interactions.

For Reception classes:

- [Maths Through Picture Books](#): training for teachers and teaching assistants to deliver targeted, small-group sessions that teach children foundational maths through picture books and conversation.
- [OxEd Whole Class and NELI](#): a universal oral language enrichment programme to be delivered alongside or independently of NELI, a targeted companion oral language intervention.

[Search your setting](#) to check your eligibility and see which projects are available to you

News from elsewhere

... ..

New workforce research highlights ongoing staffing pressures

National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) [New report](#)

NFER research highlights continued challenges in recruiting and retaining early years staff, with workforce pressures expected to grow alongside increasing demand for childcare places. Workforce capacity remains a key factor in how effectively settings can deliver high-quality provision and targeted support for disadvantaged children.

New school-based nurseries in disadvantaged areas

Department for Education [New funding](#)

The government has announced funding for over 300 schools to open or expand nurseries, creating thousands of new early years places — with an aim to focus on areas with the greatest need.

Please forward this email to colleagues you think may be interested. They can subscribe [directly here](#).



The Education Endowment Foundation

The Education Endowment Foundation has published a [Practice Review of the Early Years Pupil Premium \(EYPP\)](#) that provides a descriptive picture of how EYPP is currently being accessed, spent, and monitored. Alongside this, they have published a practical [EYPP Planning Tool](#) to support setting leaders to make effective use of the funding. The report found high levels of awareness of EYPP, which was most commonly used for resources, staff deployment and professional development. Most providers monitored impact through observations, progress tracking, staff feedback and discussions with parents. 19% believed there were eligible children for whom they had not made a claim due to parental reluctance or uncertainty. Payment of EYPP in arrears, in small instalments and bundled in with other funding were barriers to long-term strategic planning for use of the funding.

Launched new research projects focused on improving language development, developing self-regulation, and increasing positive interactions among 3–4-year-olds. [Search to find which your setting is eligible to join.](#)

Help grow the early years evidence base – join an EEF trial

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) is inviting early years settings to take part in several research projects, testing approaches designed to improve early learning and development.

- [Positive Early Childhood Education \(PECE\) – trial](#) is a professional development programme for early years educators, providing 22 practical strategies to improve self-regulation and support positive interactions among 3–4-year-olds.
- [OxEd Whole Class and NELI – trial](#) is a universal oral language enrichment programme for Reception pupils to be delivered alongside or independently of NELI, a targeted companion oral language intervention.
- [Talk with Tales for Children \(TWITCH\) - trial](#) is a professional development programme aiming to improve language interactions and language development among 3–4-year-olds by supporting nursery practitioners to use dialogic pedagogy.
- [Maths Through Picture Books - trial](#) is a 10-week, targeted small-group intervention aiming to improve early numeracy skills and confidence among reception pupils through shared reading and responsive conversations.

By taking part, settings have a chance to access these free or heavily subsidised programmes while contributing to the evidence base on effective early years practice.

[Search your setting](#) NOW to check eligibility and find out which of these projects are available to you!

Fully funded access to Maths Champions continues to be available for nurseries and schools.

Supertato Inspires a Week of Creative and Mathematical Learning



Megan Edwards, Nursery Teacher at Everton Nursery School and Family Centre, Liverpool shares how she has supported children's learning through the book, Supertato.

The children at Everton Nursery School and Family Centre have been deeply engaged in a wide range of learning opportunities inspired by the story Supertato. The text provided a rich stimulus for exploration across the curriculum, supporting the development of mathematical understanding, creative expression, and early literacy skills.

Our learning began with the children's enthusiastic search for the mischievous Evil Pea. This activity encouraged close observation as well as conversations around size, shape, and number. The children demonstrated growing confidence in subitising to 2 and identifying small amounts without the need for counting. These early mathematical experiences were woven naturally into play and supported by adults modelling precise mathematical vocabulary to extend understanding.



As part of our broader focus on fruit and vegetables, the children were introduced to the artwork of Giuseppe Arcimboldo, a Renaissance artist known for creating imaginative portraits composed entirely of fruits, vegetables, and other natural objects. The children engaged in thoughtful discussions about what they noticed in his work, describing shapes, colours, and the arrangement of different elements. Inspired by these discussions, they created their own artwork, experimenting with composition and developing their observational and expressive skills.

The narrative of Supertato also inspired the children to design and build their own traps to capture Evil Pea. Using pattern blocks, they explored pattern, shape, structure, and spatial awareness. This experience supported early problem-solving as the children considered how to construct effective traps, testing their ideas and adapting them where necessary. Adult interactions focused on monologuing alongside the children's play, modelling language related to position, shape, and size while encouraging the children to articulate their thinking.

To extend the superhero theme further, the children explored a range of superhero comic strips. They were particularly intrigued by the bold visuals and dynamic layout typical of comic-style texts. This provided a meaningful opportunity for mark-making, as the children experimented with creating their own symbols, lines, and early writing to represent action scenes, characters, and speech bubbles. This activity supported the development of early literacy skills, confidence in using mark-making tools, and an understanding that marks can carry meaning.



Overall, the opportunity of a story offered a rich blend of mathematical, creative, and literacy-based learning experiences. The children have shown curiosity, imagination, and increasing confidence as they explored ideas, expressed themselves, and engaged in collaborative play.



Department
for Education

Safer sleep from the Department for Education

This [guidance](#), created in collaboration with the Lullaby Trust, provides advice to help early years providers create and maintain safer sleep environments for babies and young children in their care.

It includes information on:

- Providing an appropriate sleep space for babies and children
- Safe use of cots, mattresses, bedding and sleep bags
- Supervising children while they are sleeping
- What to do when babies and children fall asleep whilst travelling, managing their temperature, positioning and use of comforters.
-

The Department for Education has also published answers to [frequently asked questions](#) to help early years providers prepare for planned updates on safer sleep to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework, expected to come into effect from September 2026.

Starting Reception

Starting school is an exciting milestone. To help make the transition into Reception as smooth and positive as possible please can you encourage early years settings to share the following resources from Starting Reception with parents and carers:

- [Starting Reception website](#)
- [Starting Reception Guide \(Downloadable PDF\)](#)

Starting Reception is a free, practical online resource designed to support parents and carers in preparing their child for school. It offers simple activities, helpful advice and clear guidance on the

key skills and routines that help children feel confident and ready for their first day.

Starting Reception have also provided guides for Potty Training and Children's Toothbrushing. Children being able to use the toilet independently and having healthy routines such as brushing their teeth is an important part of getting ready for starting school.

- [Potty Training Guide website](#)
 - [Potty Training Guide \(Downloadable PDF\)](#)
 - [Children's Toothbrushing Guide website](#)
 - [Children's Toothbrushing Guide \(Downloadable PDF\)](#)
-

Listening to Children, Listening to Trees

A new toolkit, [Listening to children, listening to trees](#), has been published to share the outcomes of a UKRI-funded research project led by Abi Hackett of Manchester Met University, called Voices of the Future. It aims to give voice to children and young people regarding the Government's commitment to planting millions of trees.

New screen time guidance

The Best Start in Life website has published new screen time guidance for children under 5, designed to help parents and carers support healthy digital habits in early childhood. It provides clear, evidence-informed advice on screen use, suitable content, and how adults can create positive routines around technology.¹

Full guidance: [Baby and toddler screen time guidance - Best Start in Life](#)



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/EPBVXAxTvAfirBiGA>

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



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

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 to book a place

CPD AND RECORDED SESSIONS

Beach school session first session theory Wednesday 13th May 1-4p.m.

Beach school practical Wednesday 10th June 1-4p.m.

at Everton Nursery School and Family Centre, Spencer Street, Liverpool 6 2WF

Please email SpHubNW@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk to book a place.

Forest school first session theory Wednesday 20th May 1-4p.m.

Forest school practical Wednesday 17th June 1-4p.m.

at Everton Nursery School and Family Centre, Spencer Street, Liverpool 6 2WF

Please email SpHubNW@evertoncentre.liverpool.sch.uk to book a place.

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

Information to share with families.

CBeebies Parenting

Check out the BBC CBeebies Parenting collection of expert-backed tips, simple activity ideas, and practical advice to make play easy to fit into everyday life, helping parents/caregivers to support their children's early development. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people/play>.

There is a range of activities available from [sensory play for newborns](#) and [tummy time tips](#), to [creative crafts](#), [outdoor adventures](#), and [quick 10-minute games](#) there's something for every age and stage.

Updates

Updated- Working together to Safeguarding children

Please see updated version of Working together to Safeguard Children 2026.

[Working together to safeguard children - GOV.UK](#)

The [Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act](#) has now become law. It will extend eligibility for free school meals to all children on Universal Credit (including children on roll at a school nursery), and provides for the introduction of a Single Unique Identifier.

Ofsted have updated guidance to clarify that they expect [significant events to be reported](#) as soon as possible but always within 14 days.

Safe Sleep requirement in the EYFS Statutory Framework

Early years providers are required to meet the safer sleep requirements set out in the EYFS statutory framework, which currently links to the NHS safer sleep guidance. To make the existing requirements to follow the NHS guidance clearer, the working will be updated in the EYFS framework so that more detail on safer sleep is set out directly within the framework itself. This is intended for September 2026, subject to the parliamentary and legislative process.

See the following links for more advice on safer sleep:

[Sudden infant death syndrome \(SIDS\) - NHS](#)

[Safer Sleeping Practices for Early Years Educators - Foundation Years](#)

[Home | The Lullaby Trust](#)

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.



0151 233 1969

Share on social



Check out our site [!\[\]\(b6e3a331d96c75a1e39efd137c125d99_img.jpg\)](#)