



Early Years NEWSLETTER

Issue 07
December 2023



SPOTLIGHT ON: Graduated Approach for children with SEND



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A newsletter
for childcare
providers
working with
children aged
0-5 in Reading



www.brighterfuturesforchildren.org

Hello!

Welcome to our termly Early Years and SEND team newsletter for childcare providers in Reading.

We aim to celebrate the early years workforce and raise the profile of the sector in Reading.

Our autumn/winter newsletter has a particular focus on the graduated approach, wellbeing and mental health.

This is yet another fantastic opportunity to showcase the work of local early years providers who are celebrating training achievements, project success, committed practice and so much more.

Thank you for all the personal contributions.

We hope you enjoy it!



Becky Gibson
Early Years Team Manager

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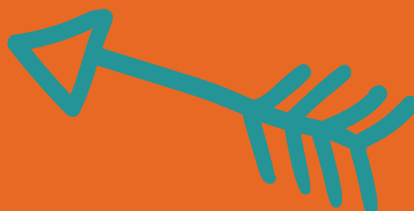
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Spotlight on... Graduated Approach document

The Graduated Approach Document (SEND)

In the early years all children require good universal provision. Some children will benefit from a more targeted approach to their learning or a higher level of support over time to meet their needs and contribute to their progress.

The Graduated Approach Document for Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities aged 0-5 years should be used to help develop your universal SEND provision and meet the needs of many children who have an identified need.

The document sets out what should be in place for all children and includes guidance to help consider what additional resource may be required for specific SEND needs. The full document can be found here: [Graduated Approach](#)

A focus on the Communication and Interaction page

What the guidance says	How I can work towards this
Adult modelling to promote communication and language using simple language and repetition	Ask a colleague to observe you for five minutes and provide feedback on how much repetition or extended language you used. Did you ask too many questions? The more we practice supporting each other to reflect and develop how we model language, the more embedded this becomes into our day to day practice.
Communication friendly environment: use visuals to show the routine of setting. eg. use of gestures and signs, equipment labelled with photographs or pictures and words	Early years practitioners in Reading were asked to share their tips for creating a communication friendly environment. Their responses are collated here and can be used as reflection points to develop your setting.
Structure of the day presented through visual timetables and now and next boards	Have you got an accessible visual timetable in your room which is used consistently with the children? Routines can help children feel secure and visuals can support children to understand what is happening now and next, and to manage change.
Verbal explanations supported by pictures and objects	All additional visuals help children make connections to the words and support communication development. Make good use of real, familiar objects around you to support children's understanding.



Spotlight on... Graduated Approach document

...A focus on the Communication and Interaction page

What the guidance says	How I can work towards this
Allow time for the child to respond to verbal communication	Some children need more time to process information and we recommend that if you provide verbal instruction (ideally with visual support) to wait up to 10 seconds to give the child time to process this information before repeating/intervening to model. You can find out more about auditory processing and support here .
Structured approach with a clear beginning, middle and end.	You can use sequencing pictures to show the process of an activity such as making a sandwich or clearing up after lunch. Find out about sequencing - click here .
Provide quiet/low distraction areas that children can access freely	Some children may find it hard to focus within a busy environment. Provide an area for when they prefer a quiet, low arousal space, sometimes called a 'workstation'.

Further information

Check out our [Speech, Language and Communication Hub for professionals](#) developed in partnership with the Reading early years sector, where you can find local tools, groups, advice slots, referral forms and more.

In addition, we have just launched a new speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) hub for parent/carers on our website. [Click here](#) to view and see more details on page 13.

Also, have a look at [Berkshire Healthcare communication toolkit pages](#).



Mental Health & Wellbeing



In November the Early Years team welcomed 16 Reading EY managers to consider how they prioritise their own mental health and wellbeing and put it at the heart of their leadership.

We were delighted to welcome [Kate Moxley](#) to lead the session. Kate has worked in the EY sector for over 25 years and now works as a consultant, trainer and Mental Health First Aid England instructor. Together we reflected on how we identify and respond to a team member when they may be experiencing mental health issues and the support and guidance available.

Feedback from the session

"The training was fantastic. Really thought provoking and full with information that I can use to support myself and my team. Would highly recommend this course to others."

"Such a brilliant opportunity and discovered lots of new information about how staff can be supported in terms of their wellbeing - such an important topic."

We will be hosting two further sessions:

Saturday 20 January 2024, 9.30am - 1.30pm, TEAMS
Mental Health Awareness (childminders and practitioners)

Thursday 7 March 2024, 9.30am-2.30pm, Civic Offices, Bridge St, Reading RG1 2LU
Mental Health Skills for Managers

Please email early.years@brighterfuturesforchildren.org to register your interest.



Mental Health & Wellbeing

There are many early years resources which can help you prioritise wellbeing in the workplace:

★ **The Anna Freud Centre** – [Early Years staff wellbeing: a resource for managers and teams](#)

★ **The Anna Freud Centre** – [Early Years in Mind Register](#)

★ **DfE** – [Help for Early Years Providers Platform](#)

★ **Kate Moxley** – [A Wellbeing Toolkit for Early Years Educators](#)

★ **Employee Assistance Programme** – [Information in relation to introducing in the workplace](#)



Wellbeing Information and Resources for all

Quell – an online mental health and wellbeing service available for parents, families and school staff in Reading. It is an anonymous service and simple to use with an appointment booking system, chat functions, a range of forums and lots of other helpful information and support for you to [access here](#).

Education Support – a free emotional support helpline for everyone working in education, including early years. It is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and you will speak to a qualified counsellor. [Contact details here](#).

Every Mind Matters – the NHS recognises there are little things which we can all do to take care of our mental health. It's produced a free, five-step mind quiz which can be [accessed here](#). Completing the quiz will generate a personalised plan including expert advice and practical tips to help look after your mental health and wellbeing.

Mind – a registered charity in England with a website dedicated to mental health and tips for everyday living which can be [found here](#).

Heads Together – signposting to a number of organisations if you need support with your mental health, which you can [access here](#).





Mental Health & Wellbeing

Popular wellbeing apps

- ★ CALM - Mindfulness and meditation
- ★ Breathe2Relax - Relaxation and the “belly breathing” technique that has proven benefits for your overall mental health.
- ★ Headspace - Meditation and sleep



Celebrations!



Early Years Assistant of the Year

Last term we asked you to nominate your 'Early Years Assistant of the Year' and we received lots of excellent entries which made it a tough decision for the panel. **Rachel Hallcup** was selected for the award because of her inspiring and committed practice. The team at Playday Caversham share why they nominated Rachel.

"We would like to nominate Rachel for Assistant of the year because she is not only an inspiration to her team but also goes above and beyond for all the children here at Playday, taking pride in knowing all the children, their next steps and their families.

Rachel always inspires the children and ignites their learning enabling them to confidently progress. She works with the families making sure they are all working together and supports individual families to overcome any challenges they might face.

Rachel is always enhancing her CPD both inside and outside of work. Her inclusive practise has enhanced and developed her room helping to develop little minds.

Rachel is always thinking about the wellbeing of her room and likes to make sure everyone is always ok.

Rachel mentors and encourages all staff members throughout the nursery.

We are incredibly proud to have Rachel as a member of our team."

The team at Playday Caversham



Well done Rachel!



Rachel Hallcup





Celebrations!

Thank you to Monkey Moos and childminder Melanie Mix for also highlighting the excellent work of your teams!

Monkey Moos

Abbie Ward

Huntley Wharf nominated Abbie Ward because she has impressed the team with her positive attitude and natural ability to relate to children. Well done Abbie!



Abbie Ward



Welly Boot Lodge Childminding

Emily Last

Kellie Dixon shared how impressed she is with Emily's commitment to professional development:

"Emily, our level 3 practitioner, has this term completed the EYPDP for cohort 1. She has really enjoyed the weekly training sessions and particularly enjoyed the supporting PSED topic. Emily works on her continuous development and we are very proud of her commitment to her role here at the lodge. Well done Emily, keep up the great work - from all of us here at Welly Boot Lodge. We look forward to term two and supporting all of our children and their families with you."

Childminding

Eliza Cygan

Melanie Mix (childminder) nominated Eliza Cygan who is working incredibly hard to learn the profession and who shows so much potential and dedication already.

Well done Eliza!



Eliza Cygan



Vanda Biddle

Vanda is a Reading Childminder and has celebrated an impressive 30 years of childminding this year.

Congratulations Vanda!



Vanda Biddle



Settings news

Early Years REECH Project

The early years project is well underway in Reading using a child centred, holistic approach to child development with a focus on connection and joy.

- ★ Relationships and routines
- ★ Environment and experiences
- ★ Engagement – musicality and storytelling
- ★ Conversation and interactions
- ★ Home environment and learning to use the toilet

All nurseries and pre-schools have been asked to identify one or two champions to work closely with the Early Years Team to engage in the REECH programme. The Lodge Day Nursery and Playday Caversham share how they have embraced the project and developed practice within their settings.

Sara Hawkins & Layla Littlewood, The Lodge Day Nursery

“Our Explorers room (18mths-3yrs old) took part in the REECH project with the Early Years PADO team. We were really keen to take part as we had found the earlier training provided by the team thought provoking and inspiring.

Following the initial session, the room leader Sara started to make changes and implemented the new approach for the children. We made changes to the environment, in particular the layout of the room, after looking at how the children were using the space. We continue to make this flexible and most of the smaller play furniture in the room can be moved so we are able to observe what the children are doing daily and how the children are playing to move the equipment around accordingly. For example, moving the smaller play kitchen nearer to the playdough table when we have this out so they can use the playdough for role play purposes.

We also used this opportunity to look at staff interactions and through having a better understanding of which children were showing different schema interests we could build our language and communications to enhance the interactions between staff and children, deepening their engagement further. Our next steps are to show parents the importance of play during sessions where they can stay. We have already shared information on a display for parents as well as discussing some of the key points in the summer newsletter.”

Sam Norris, Playday Caversham

“We have been working with Lisa for a few months now, and we have found this to be very informative, helping us to enrich our setting. Looking into areas such as home/nursery partnerships, thinking outside of the box and reflecting on our practice, communication and our environment.

Our Baby Bear Room (ages 2 to 3 years) has been able to look at communication and how we can make positive changes in a simple way to make sure all interactions are positive and meaningful. For example, at our meal times we already had a great meal time in place but now we look at how

Settings news

we can expand our conversations and what impact is the practitioner bringing to this experience, just by looking at where the practitioner is sat around the table and their enthusiasm when talking.

Delivering group time at the child's level in the Baby Bears room has allowed our children to become immersed in the interactions, holding their attention for longer sitting on the floor.

Playday provides a strong routine where all the children know what is happening and when. The project allowed us to step back and look at all the children, making sure some were not just following and that the routine was actually embedded and purposeful.

Some of our practitioners are not confident in the way in which they deliver stories and are therefore not giving the children the best experience, the project is helping overcome this and therefore giving our children more enriched story times.

I believe it has also given our team confidence. Having someone comment on what we are doing well is always nice to hear from someone other than myself.

Having support within our setting has had a positive effect, it enabled us all to just step back, think and reflect. It also allowed myself time to talk over my curriculum and vision and this has been vital to the future of our setting. At the end of the day for all concerned including the children this has been a great experience and helps us to provide the best for our child within our setting."

If two-year-olds are attending your setting and you have not yet engaged with the second year, please sign up now for the final term by emailing Lisa Paine from the Prime Area Development (PADO) team: lisa.paine@brighterfuturesforchildren.org

General news

All Providers Update

Thank you to those who attended the Providers Update in November - the network is so important in bringing the sector together. Special thanks to Ruben and Ebony at Chiltern Day Nursery, who shared their experience of implementing the EY REECH project in person and reminded us all of the importance of musicality, connection and joy.



Also, thank you to our school's forum representative Ita McGullion, from Kennet Day Nursery, who provided an update and overview of the exciting new BfC Reading Inclusion Support in Education (RISE) initiative starting in Reading.

- Finally, thank you to Cathy McCarthy from the BfC Virtual Schools Team who provided an overview of their responsibilities and how we can work together to support children with a social worker and those who have previously been looked after.

General news

Expanded Early Years Entitlements

As you will know, the government has committed to an expansion of the existing early years entitlements which will be introduced in phases from next year:

- April 2024, eligible working parents of two-year-olds may be able to access 15 hours per week term time, from the term after their child's birthday.
- September 2024, eligible working parents of children aged nine months up to three-years-old may be able to access 15 hours per week term time, from the term after they turn 9 months old.
- September 2025, eligible working parents of children aged nine months up to three-years-old may be able to access 30 hours free childcare per week term time, from the term after they turn 9 months old.

Ideas to start preparing for the expansion of entitlements in your setting:

- Signpost families to [Childcare Choices](#) so they can find out if they may be eligible and when to apply
- Estimate how many families may request to switch their paid place to DfE funded
- Consider expansion perhaps within your existing premises or new (Capital funding opportunities will be announced by the DfE soon)
- Read the [Childcare Sufficiency Assessment for Reading 2023 here](#) to understand local supply and demand (2024 version will be released in the spring)
- Book an appointment with our L5 Business Consultants by emailing early.years@brighterfuturesforchildren.org
- Update your website, FIS page and invoices to reflect any changes to your offer
- Look out for local webinars to guide you through the changes in the spring.

Choose a childcare career campaign

Last term we announced the launch of a 'Choose a Childcare Career' campaign aimed at growing and retaining the existing childcare workforce in Reading. The campaign is designed to promote our new BFfC 'Choose a childcare career' webpage that highlights the opportunities available locally and the wide range of qualifications and progression pathways. There is an emphasis on choosing a career to feel proud of and helping to give children the best start. We really need your help to share the campaign widely!

Follow and share from our social media accounts:

 [brighter-futures-for-children](#)

 [@BFfCChild](#)

 [@BFfC Child](#)

Speech, Language and Communication – Parents' Hub

Thank you all so much to everyone who has contributed information and knowledge to help us build the new online SLCN Parents' Hub. It's a one-stop-shop including information for parents about support available in Reading when a child may need support with their speech, language or communication. We are in the process of launching it now, so please share far and wide to support parents and carers so they can access ideas and support for their child's development. Access it here: [BFfC Speech, language and Communication - Parents' Hub](#)

Reading Family Information Service (FIS) wins two awards

Reading FIS is very pleased to announce that it has won two awards at the Coram Family and Childcare, National Association of Family Information Service (NAFIS) conference this month. The team won the 'Best SEND Local Offer' and 'Best Promotion of 2 Year Funding'. The awards were presented by Liz Roberts, reporter, column writer and former editor and chief for Nursery World. Thank you to everyone who supports the work of FIS/SEND Local Offer. Well done team FIS!

Primary School Admissions

Applications are now open and the deadline to submit is **15 January 2024**, find more about the process and signpost parents here [Primary School Admissions](#).

Reading Children's Centres

Our children's centres welcome all families and provide a wide range of services to give children the best start in life. Further information and timetables can be found here [Reading Children's Centres](#).

Early Years & SEND Team Conference: "Understanding the Unique Child"

Save the date: Saturday 12 October 2024, further details coming soon!



Is your child 3 or 4-years-old?

Primary school place – you must apply now

If your child was born on or between **1 September 2019** and **31 August 2020**, you need to apply for a primary school place now.

You must still apply even if your child already attends the nursery attached to your preferred school.

Deadline for applications is **15 January 2024**.

Apply online at
www.brighterfuturesforchildren.org/primary
(or scan the QR code)
It's quick, easy and secure.



For help and information:
Web: www.brighterfuturesforchildren.org/school-admissions
Email: Admissions@brighterfuturesforchildren.org
Tel: 0118 937 3777



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EYFS consultation outcome

In May this year the government launched an eight-week Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) consultation to seek views on a range of proposals to remove burdens and offer more flexibility for providers within the EYFS. The Department for Education (DfE) has now set out the official response to the consultation, which you can [read here](#).

EYFS consultation outcome

The department has also published an independent evaluation of the EYFS reforms on early education which can be [found here](#). The report uses qualitative research and surveys to outline how the reforms have been integrated into practice across the sector and into the range of early years provider types.



Look out for our next
newsletter in spring 2024!

You can see all our Early Years
newsletters on the Brighter Futures
for Children website [here](#).

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