



# Early Years NEWSLETTER

Issue 06  
July 2023

## SPOTLIGHT: Choose a childcare career



### Inside

- Schemas
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- Focus on practice
- And more!

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



[www.brighterfuturesforchildren.org](http://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.

Our summer newsletter includes a spotlight on childcare careers, reflects on the impact of Prime Area support and celebrates SchemaPlay training.

The spotlight is on you!

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

Thank you for the personal contributions.



**Becky Gibson**  
Early Years Team Manager

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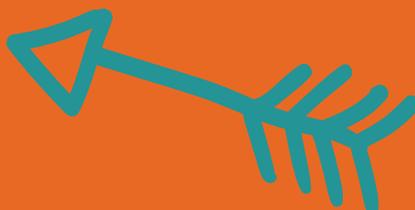
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 @BFfCChild



# Spotlight on... choose a childcare career

## Choose a childcare career

Recruiting and retaining staff is one of the biggest challenges faced by childcare providers nationally. In 2021 the Early Years Alliance published its [Breaking Point](#) report and found that 84% of respondents were finding it difficult to recruit early years staff. The most common reasons were fewer applicants overall, unsuitable or no qualifications and difficulties in meeting salary expectations.

### Retention survey

In Reading, early years providers were asked to contribute to a recruitment and retention survey to understand the local position in 2022. The findings showed that 75% of respondents were also finding it difficult to recruit early years staff. The most common reasons were long hours, a high level of responsibility not reflected in pay and an unclear career path and progression. This year our [Childcare Sufficiency Assessment](#) shows recruitment still remains a concern to 35% of early years and 30% of out of school providers.

### Nationally...

Nationally, the government has committed to an uplift in early years funding, the opportunities for free, high-quality training have increased and career progression tools have been developed.

### Locally...

Locally, we are keeping recruitment and retention in the spotlight within our networks, workshops and business consultations to support the sector with their concerns. We have strengthened the early years and SEND local training and qualifications offer and have been working to raise the profile of early years, including career opportunities in Reading.

### Campaign

We are pleased to announce 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.

The social media campaign is ultimately aimed at recruiting and retaining childcare staff and childminders to Reading.

The new webpage includes career, contacts, qualifications and progression information for the following roles:

- ★ Childminding
- ★ Early Years Apprentice
- ★ Childcare Nanny
- ★ Early Years Practitioner/Teacher
- ★ Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo)
- ★ Nursery Management
- ★ Childcare Volunteer
- ★ Play work

There is a section to encourage more men into childcare and we will continue to develop the page and gather your contributions.

Please contact our team if you are interested in writing a few lines to showcase your role to help recruitment locally. We can also include a link to promote employment in your setting.



# Spotlight on... choose a childcare career

In addition to recruitment and retention, we will promote the business support available locally and encourage expansion of provision ahead of the [extended entitlements](#) due to start next year.

We encourage you to share the campaign widely and include links to the [BFFC Choose a childcare career page](#) within your recruitment adverts and staff induction documents.

**Follow and share from our social media accounts:**

 Facebook

 Twitter

 LinkedIn



*Choose a childcare career webpage*

## Schema

### SchemaPlay training

In April we delivered our first SchemaPlay training sessions for early years practitioners and childminders in Reading.

Twenty-five practitioners accessed the offer and took part in a range of theory and practical activities designed to help practitioners provide the best play opportunities for children. Activities included 'scheme spotting', where practitioners are encouraged to identify schemes in children's play from a variety of case studies and how these might be observed within play, and to begin to 'seed' the environment. 'Seeding' considers how an enabling environment can be enhanced with resources specifically chosen based on schemas and schemes observed through children's play, knowledge of the child, and communication with their family.

Thank you to everyone who attended for your enthusiasm, contributions and valuable feedback. The follow up 'scheme spotting' sessions in the settings are now under way, with many aspiring to gain full setting accreditation.

## Your feedback

*“Very good quality course”*

*“Fab, lots of practical input & ideas”*

*“Fantastic!”*

Jenny Chapman and Lisa Paine are accredited SchemaPlay trainers. The training is now available as a bespoke session for settings.

If you are interested in whole setting training, or individual practitioner accreditation, please speak to a member of the BFFC Early Years team. You can call them on **0118 937 4730** or email them at: [early.years@brighterfuturesforchildren.org](mailto:early.years@brighterfuturesforchildren.org)

## Follow up visits



*Eliza from The Muddy Boots Project has created a wonderful display which supports informing parents about Schemaplay ideas and Scheme spotting opportunities.*

## Focus on practice

## Prime Area Development Officer (PADO) Project

Research shows that the reduction and full closure of some services during the COVID 19 pandemic impacted on children's outcomes, widening disparities and intensifying existing vulnerabilities, poverty and inequalities. This highlighted a need for targeted early childhood support and Reading Borough Council provided Brighter Futures for Children with additional funding to help young children to have an equal chance of success.



# Focus on practice

We were able to expand our EY team to include two new EYFS Prime Area Development Officer positions for two years. Jenny Chapman and Lisa Paine were appointed in Reading to identify, reach and support all children born during the pandemic.

## Background

The EYFS Prime Area Project was developed to ensure extra support for all early years settings in Reading with a two-year-old cohort. The aim is to understand the impact of the pandemic on this group of children, individual setting priorities and to work with practitioners as they focus on improving outcomes for children through access to high quality education and care.

The first year of the project is now complete and 53 settings have engaged with the offer of support and an additional 253 early years support visits have taken place. We can now start to understand the needs of the cohort and the impact of the project on children, staff and the wider context.

During the initial visit, settings were asked to provide a development overview for their cohort of two year olds before engaging in the programme of support. This was followed by a post support survey after the final visit. Overall, the information shared by practitioners shows that during the three to five month window of support, children's communication and language development increased by 20%, physical development by 21% and personal, social and emotional development by 14%. Children's progress will be influenced by many factors, however this is a good indicator that the sectors commitment to quality is having a positive

impact on the children attending.

Practitioners also reported an increase in their confidence to support children with emerging needs which consequently resulted in fewer referrals to the Early Years SEND Team. In addition, Jenny and Lisa were able to provide early observation, support and advice for children on the EYSEND waiting list with many of these children making such strong progress that practitioners felt additional help was no longer required.

## Speech and language support

The PADO project has also contributed to a wider plan to support children's speech, language and communication development early. Other initiatives include local workstreams, a champions network, the design of Reading reflection tools and advice and the offer of additional training. This year the number of speech and language referrals has consistently decreased which may be attributed to enhanced provision and developing staff skills and confidence.





## Focus on practice

### REECH programme

Ahead of launching the second year we have developed and strengthened the offer in response to the children's needs and practitioner voice. This year will take a child centred, holistic approach to child development with a focus on connection and joy. All settings will be asked to identify one or two champions to work closely with Jenny or Lisa to engage in the REECH programme, a seven-week professional development opportunity.

### The REECH programme will focus on:

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



## Celebrations!

### Practitioner of the Year Award

Last term we asked you to nominate your 'Speech, Language and Communication Champion' of the year.

The panel is delighted to recognise the work of **Laura Mortimer, from Little Tots**, who has shown such dedication to inclusion and ensuring that all children have the very best opportunities right from the start.

WELL DONE  
LAURA!



### Jenny Chapman, PADO, shares why she nominated Laura

"While visiting the setting, the good practice that has stood out to me is how Laura can explain what support she has tried already, what she is currently using and what works well for individual children when supporting delays in speech, language and communication. Laura showed how well she knew the children, their individual goals around communication and how effectively she supported these using dedicated individual time to model as well as time to practice during the children's general free play.



# Celebrations!



I noticed how truly present Laura is for the children. Laura would support them with developing the serve and return part of social conversational skills. When interacting, Laura will stop and get down to the child's level, give them her full attention, let them lead the interaction and let them know what they are trying to say or share. Laura pays attention to them and what they are doing and responds with interest. She also connects with the children through using open body language, smiling and taking time to actively listen before responding.

What seemed especially key to building good relationships and promoting a child's interest in communicating was how Laura has an instinctive way of holding a child's hand or incorporating positive touch to connect and help the children focus and take their time when they are attempting to speak and to reassure the child that she is available for them for as long as they need."

## Early Years Assistant of the Year

We would like to shine a light on nursery and childminding assistants in our autumn newsletter and invite you to nominate your 'EY Assistant of the Year'. Include details of why you feel their good practice is commendable and a photograph with their permission. The entries will be shared with a local panel and the winner will be announced in the newsletter with a £20 Amazon voucher awarded. Email your nomination by 31 August to: [early.years@brighterfuturesforchildren.org](mailto:early.years@brighterfuturesforchildren.org)

## Long Service

### 20 years of childminding!

Childminders **Dominique Marcham** and **Cathy Armstrong** have celebrated 20 years of minding! During this time they have developed excellent reputations and have great enthusiasm for the profession. Both have initiated and maintained strong relationships with many Reading families whose children attended their settings. They are continually reflecting on their practice and improving their provision to meet the needs of the children.

During the 20 years of service, Cathy and Dominique have participated in our networks and projects and have continued to access early years training. Cathy was also recognised as a lead practitioner for Reading and achieved a Quality Kitemark.



**Dom and Cathy**

They both shared:

"This continues to be an amazing career full of fun times, learning through play, transitions and laughter."



# Celebrations!

## Melissa

### Emmer Green Kindergarten

Melissa from Emma Green Kindergarten is very new and already all of our interactions have been super positive. I have complete faith in her ability and desire to enhance SEND provision within the setting with the support of her team. Melissa's knowledge is growing fast and she has developed a great bank of ideas.

**Sam Smith, Early Years SEND Advisor**

## Jackie Arsllett

### The Ridgeway Primary School

I had the pleasure of working with Jackie in her final year of teaching at The Ridgeway and I can honestly say it has been a delight. I am sure that in her 30 years of teaching she has changed the lives of so many children in her care. Jackie is the kind of teacher that children remember long after they have left her class. She always goes the extra mile and is absolutely determined that they will succeed and shine - and they do!

Jackie's relationship with parents and carers has been a large part of her success - her welcoming smile and her clear understanding of each child in her care have ensured that parents/carers warm to her and this makes such a difference to the outcomes for the children.

She is a really supportive Early Years Phase leader to all of those in her team and very protective of them. Over the years, Jackie has worked with too many headteachers and staff to mention and was also known as a well-respected EYFS moderator across Reading.

Her years of experience and huge knowledge made, and continue to make Jackie an outstanding early years teacher and leader. She will leave a big hole, but she has absolutely earned some rest and relaxation!

**Norah Edgar, Headteacher**

## Park Day Nursery

Here at Park Day we have slowly got back to normal after COVID times.

We have been doing regular stay and play for parents, allowing them to see the exciting things their children get up to.

Our team nurtures children's enthusiasm for exploring and investigating and always encourage them to problem-solve and test out their ideas. We're able to plan an inspiring curriculum which is informed by our team's meticulous observations and assessments. They all use a wealth of inventive ways to expand and reinforce children's knowledge.

We are proud of all the staff that make this nursery a fun and a safe place to learn and develop.

**Emma Rapley, Nursery Manager**

## EY SEND bespoke Training

### PlayDay setting

We received our bespoke training course run by Sam/Ange.

All of the girls within our team came back telling me they learnt so much and enjoyed the day. The delivery of the session was outstanding, the pace and content was excellent. It takes a lot to silence my team, as you can imagine, and they were 100 per cent engaged at all times.

We would love the opportunity to book more sessions as we found it invaluable.

**Sam Norris, PlayDay**



# Local news

## 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.

All site timetables and the parenting programme can be found here: [Children's centres - Brighter Futures For Children](#)

## Baby Boost

Baby Boost is a project to support babies born over the pandemic who may have missed out on opportunities to learn and socialise.

Further information and timetables can be found here: [Baby Boost for lockdown babies - Brighter Futures For Children](#)

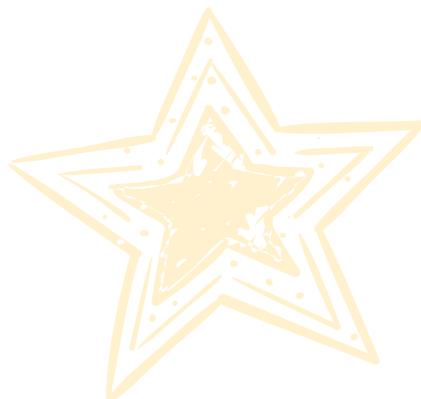
## New Reading Central Library and Civic customer reception

Reading Borough Council has launched a four-week consultation on plans for the Council's Civic Offices to deliver a modern, new Central Library and redesign the customer reception and service area - find the details [here](#).

Residents are invited to have their say via an [online survey](#) and at consultation events taking place locally. Paper copies of the survey are available at all Reading libraries and can also be requested in large print and translated via email at: [librarycivicproject@reading.gov.uk](mailto:librarycivicproject@reading.gov.uk).

## Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership Audit

In December 2022 we asked all early years settings across Reading to complete the BWSCP safeguarding audit. The safeguarding audit seeks to promote safeguarding best practice, to raise service quality and positive outcomes across early years in Reading. The audit is aligned to the EYFS Statutory Framework which sets the foundation of safeguarding measures for early years providers. Providers were asked to identify if they had either met or not met the criteria which gave a clear overview of strengths and actions. Overall safeguarding practice is strong across all setting types, though a few risks were identified and have informed an action plan. The full report will be available on request.



## Spring 2023 Budget

In the government's spring budget, the Chancellor announced reforms to childcare which will be introduced in phases ([view the reforms here](#)):

- from April 2024, working parents of two-year-olds can access 15 hours per week
- from September 2024, working parents of children aged nine months up to three-years-old can access 15 hours per week
- from September 2025, working parents of children aged nine months up to three-years-old can access 30 hours free childcare per week
- By September 2026 most schools will provide their own before and after school care.

Local managers and childminders discussed the opportunities, risks and how the DfE can support the roll out of extended entitlements during our summer network - look out for more events coming soon. In addition, national estimated funding uplift figures have also been announced by the DfE for September 2023. We are set to find out the local authority rate from the DfE soon and once confirmed will share directly with Reading providers.

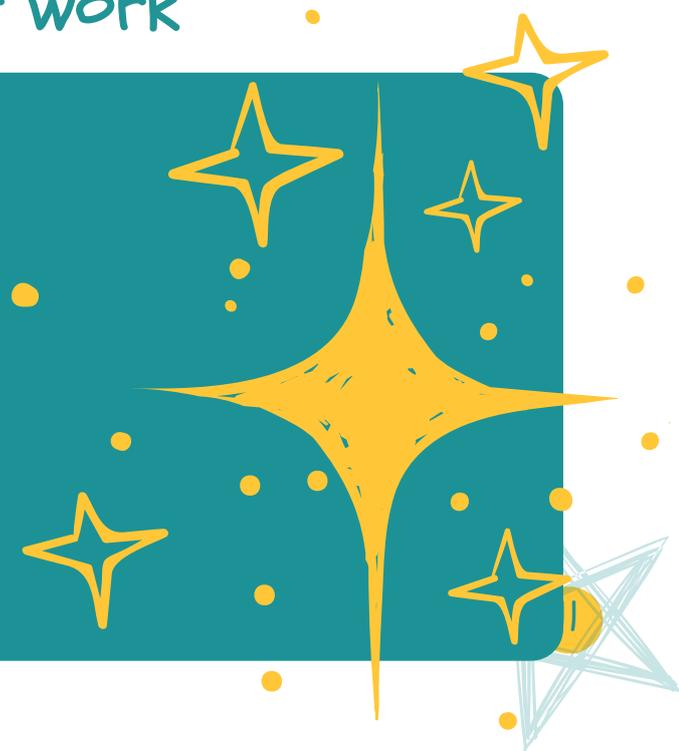
## Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) government consultation

The DfE is seeking views on proposed changes to requirements in the early years foundation stage (EYFS) to offer providers more flexibility and make it easier for practitioners to join the workforce and progress their careers. The consultation builds on the measures consulted on in summer 2022 and announced at the Spring Budget 2023. The changes to two-year-old child to staff ratios and supervision while eating are due to come into force in September 2023, subject to parliamentary procedure.

Local managers and childminders discussed their views during our summer network event. You can have your say [here](#).

## Useful links to assist your work

- ★ [Report concerns about a child](#)
- ★ [Local Authority Designated Officer \(LADO\)](#)
- ★ [Under 5s Services \(for professionals\)](#)
- ★ [Under 5s Services \(for parents/carers\)](#)
- ★ [Under 5s with SEND](#)
- ★ [Baby Boost](#)
- ★ [Reading Children's Centres](#)





Look out for our next  
newsletter in the autumn!

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



## Contact



**0118 937 4730**



[early.years@brighterfuturesforchildren.org](mailto:early.years@brighterfuturesforchildren.org)



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