

Early Years, SEND and Childcare Briefing

17 January 2025

Dear Provider,

Welcome to the Early Years, SEND and Childcare briefing delivered to you on a fortnightly basis, please share with your teams and local networks.

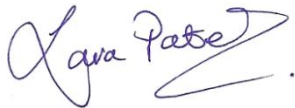
Announcement from BfFC/RBC

Brighter Futures for Children has delivered children's services, on Reading Borough Council's behalf, since 2018. The seven-year contract is due to expire in March 2026 and the Council is obliged to give us notice of its intention to renew or not ahead of the 12 months' notice period.

You may have seen in the local media, or have heard from colleagues, that the Council's Policy Committee is considering a recommendation to bring its Children's Services back in house. I am writing to notify you that at its meeting on 18 December the Council's Policy Committee agreed the [recommended proposal](#). The final decision will be taken by Council on 28 January 2025. The recommendation is supported by the BfFC Board.

We want to reassure you that nothing will change in the immediate future and BfFC's relationship with you will continue as is. We will, of course, notify you of the final decision once made and how, if at all, it will affect you.

Best wishes



Lara Patel

Executive Director of Children's Services
Brighter Futures for Children

Safeguarding

Annual Safeguarding Audit

It is now time for you to carry out an annual safeguarding audit, to be returned by **Friday 31 January 2025**. The purpose is to ensure that all Ofsted registered providers are fulfilling their statutory safeguarding responsibilities. In summary, this directly links to the statutory requirements in [Working together to safeguard children 2023](#).

The audit process requires you to work through the standards of the self-assessment tool. There is no expectation that all standards will be fully met. Accurate returns allow us to identify needs within individual settings, or wider themes across the partnership, and implement additional support, as necessary. Please also provide any context in the comments boxes as appropriate. Where a question is not applicable, but there is no 'N/A' option, mark it as 'Not Met' and provide supplementary information in the comments box. The audit should also be used as part of the standard monitoring and reporting processes within your governing body.

Child attendance

Acceptance of early education for children under five years is not compulsory, however, it is important to ask questions when children do not return to a setting, particularly when they are considered vulnerable, please refer the [BfFC EY DSL Handbook](#) (p.21) to review the responsibilities of designated safeguarding leads.

Recent publication

Read the [Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel annual report briefing](#).

BfC training and network offer:

- **Designated Safeguarding Lead – Refresher Training**
29 January, 9.30am-12.30pm (Civic Offices), £33pp. Book via [email](#)
- **Designated Safeguarding Lead – New to the role**
4 February, 9.30am-3.30pm (Civic Offices), £33pp. Book via [email](#)
- **Training for Designated Teachers and SENCOs – Virtual School**
4 February, 9.30am-12pm (Civic Offices). Book via [email](#)
- **Universal Safeguarding Training**
5 February, 9.30am-12.30pm & 6.30-9.30pm (Civic Offices). Book via the [SLA](#) or [email](#)

Leadership

Apply for a free defibrillator for your community

The British Heart Foundation (BHF) has recently re-opened its community defibrillator scheme. This scheme allows local community groups to apply for a free defibrillator and cabinet which must then be made accessible for use within the local community. You can [apply for a defibrillator](#) on the British Heart Foundation website.

BfC training and network offer:

- **SENCO Network**
4 February, 3-4pm (Teams)
The networks are for Early Years SENCOs & Practitioners who are leading on supporting children with SEND in their setting. It will cover updates from LA and specific SEND topics.
Book via the [SLA](#) or [email](#)

EYFS and Beyond

Inclusion Funding panel date

The next inclusion funding panel will be held on 6 February please ensure any requests for funding are submitted by **31 January**.

FIS/SEND Local Offer thanks you!

Thank you to schools who updated/reviewed the SEND Local Offer Information reports at the end of 2024. The final return is 87%, which is a significant increase on 2023, and will go towards the annual report which helps parent carers and professionals to make informed choices. Your support is much appreciated.

Rainbow Rescue from Reading Rep Theatre

A free show coming to all Reading libraries in February and March for children ages 18 months to 3 years. For more information and to book tickets click [here](#).

Department for Education Early Years and Childcare Expansion Provider Roadshow

This early years event is an opportunity for you to meet with Department for Education officials to share your ideas, challenges and the opportunities expanding your provision to meet the expanded childcare entitlements from September 2025. You will also hear how the Department for Education is working on the government's new vision for early years education and childcare. These

roadshows, which started in January 2024, are an important part of shaping early years and childcare policy and delivery. When [registering](#), please choose your preferred 3 roundtable sessions.

When: Tuesday 11 February 2025

Venue: Radisson Blu Hotel, London Bloomsbury, 9-13 Bloomsbury St, London WC1B 3QD

Times: starts at 10:30am (registration from 10am) and closes at 3:30pm

Stronger Practice Hubs

[Register online](#) to join the Thames Valley Stronger Practice Hubs to gain access to Newsletters, training, webinars, workshops, blogs & more.

TVSP Hub January Webinars:

Poor behaviour? Or Schematic Play?

Presented by Tamsin Grimmer

'On Demand': Recording available from **Tuesday 14th January**

Dingley's Promise - EY SEND Assessment Guidance

Presented by Lee Friend

Tuesday 21 January, 7-8pm

Dingley's Promise Family Survey

Dingley's Promise provide education to children under 5 with SEND and support to their families. They work to ensure the voices of children and families are heard and to push for policy change which improves lives. If families have a child aged 0-5 with SEND please invite them to complete [the short research survey](#).

BFFC training and network offer:

- **A Holistic Approach to the EYFS**

16 January, 6.30-8.30pm & 30 January 2.30-4.30pm (Civic Offices) FREE

The offer is designed to help all practitioners working in Early Years to reflect on what underpins the EYFS Framework, Characteristics of Effective Learning and Areas of Learning and Development. Book via the [SLA](#) or [email](#).

- **3 Day Intensive Interaction Practitioner Training**

27 January, 24 February and 24 March. 9.30am-3.30pm (Civic Offices) £350pp

A mentored course over three months, with three in-person facilitated study days to develop good intensive interaction practices, using a combination of learning experiences, including: video evaluation, presentations, facilitated discussions and course reading. This course is for those that have attended and completed the introduction session.

Book via the [SLA](#) or by [email](#)

- **Wraparound Childcare Network Meeting**

25 February 2025, 12.30pm-2.30pm (teams) or 6.30pm-8.30pm (teams) FREE

We invite all Primary Schools and Wraparound providers to join us for our next upcoming Wraparound Childcare Network Meeting for Reading Borough. This event is an excellent opportunity to connect with fellow childcare providers, share best practices, and discuss the latest developments in the sector.

The theme for this Wraparound Network meeting is: **Best Practice Inclusion for All**. To secure your place at one of the network meetings, please register online using the following link:

- **12.30-2.30pm** (teams) [Book Here - Afternoon Meeting](#)
- **7-9pm** virtually (teams) [Book Here - Evening Meeting](#)

Please book by **18 February**. To attend one of the meetings, you may need to create an account at <https://readingeducationservices.co.uk/>

Mental Health and Wellbeing

BFFC training and network offer:

- **Therapeutic Thinking Early Years module – Phillipa Garn**
6 March, 6.30-8.30pm & 7 March, 9.30am-2.30pm (teams)
Phillipa from [Therapeutic Thinking](#) to deliver virtual training which will focus on using a therapeutic approach within an Early Years setting.

Early Years and Childcare Sufficiency

Are you ready for September 2025?

The Early Years team have created the attached checklist to support Reading providers with their business offer and sustainability ahead of the final stage of the expanded offer in September. This is not an exhaustive list and should be used as a prompt to help you consider what changes you may need to implement within your provision to deliver the new expanded offer.

Are your families accessing one of the offers below that support with childcare costs?

Tax-Free Childcare

Tax-Free Childcare is a UK wide offer. Eligible working parents with children 11 or under can get up to £2,000 per child, per year, towards their childcare costs (or up to £4,000 for disabled children 16 or under).

Parents using the scheme open an online childcare account which they use to pay you directly for childcare. Payments work just as they do through an online bank account. Each payment is accompanied by a reference number for each child so you can identify their payments.

You will only be able to receive Tax-Free Childcare payments from your customers if you've [signed up](#) to Tax-Free Childcare.

Universal Credit Childcare

Universal Credit can pay up to 85% of childcare costs. This includes holiday clubs, after-school clubs and breakfast clubs.

Parents must be on Universal Credit and either in paid work or starting a job in the next month. If they live with a partner, they both need to be in paid work. There are some exceptions to this which they can discuss with their Work Coach.

Ensure you are sharing details for Tax-Free Childcare and Universal Credit with your families – visuals and further details can be found at [Childcare Choices](#).

Blessed Hugh Faringdon School Careers Fair

Blessed Hugh Faringdon School is holding a Careers Fair for years 7-13 on the 19 March 2025 from 8.55am-3.05pm and are inviting childcare providers to attend, if you are interested in having a stall or would like further information, please contact Rhiannon Gittings at R.Gittings@hughfaringdon.org.

BFFC training and network offer:

- **Sustainability – Break even and place planning**
28 January 10.30-11.30am (teams) or 29 January 7-8pm (teams) FREE

A short workshop to include planning for financial stability in response to the expanded early years childcare entitlements. Book via the [SLA](#) or [email](#)

Training/Specialist Advisory Support

Training programme

The latest training programme from the team is attached. Book on to sessions via the [SLA](#) or [email](#).

- [SEND Contact Days](#): First four Tuesdays of the month
- **Early Years and Childcare Advisory Support**
Childminders, daycare, sessional and wraparound and holiday providers are invited to [request time](#) with a member of the Early Years and Childcare team for advisory support between agreed partnership visits.

Compliments/Celebrations

Your contributions

Is there something you are particularly proud of that has been achieved by staff or the children in your setting? Do you have a team member that is celebrating long service or achieved a new qualification that deserves a shout out? Please share these with us so that we can share your news with the sector!! Email: early.years@brighterfuturesforchildren.org

Kind regards

Early Years Team

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