

Early Years, SEND and Childcare Briefing 11 December

Dear Provider,

This briefing includes updates on [Safer Recruitment](#), [FREE business planning training for wraparound providers and schools](#), [Christmas holiday activities in Reading](#) and [training dates for 2026](#).

Safeguarding

Safer Recruitment

Further to the safeguarding reforms in September 2025, which included updated guidance related to 'Suitable People', a reminder that providers may find it helpful to read the government's statutory guidance [Keeping children safe in education 2025](#) alongside the EYFS framework, for best practice safer recruitment recommendations, including procedures for seeking and providing references.

The Department for Education is continuing with its early years and childcare recruitment campaign 'Do something BIG. Work with small children.' To make the most of this opportunity locally, please post your relevant vacancies to the **Education & Childcare Jobs** advert category and include either **Early Years** or **Wraparound Childcare** in the job title, depending on the role. Vacancies can be advertised by registering [here](#).

Leadership

EHCP Annual Reviews

There have been some communication issues raised regarding settings not being notified that an EHCP annual review is due. This has been raised to the EHCP SEND team; however, it is advised you also put a reminder in your diary for 5 months after an EHCP has been finalised; to then organise the Annual review for the 6 month point.

EYFS and Beyond

Parents: Understanding Ofsted report cards and grades

A short video and summary which explains the new report cards and what has changed from the previous system for parents:

[Understanding Ofsted report cards and grades - GOV.UK](#)

[New Ofsted report cards and grades: a guide for parents](#)

Portage Workshop Early Bird Offer

A Small Steps Approach to Learning for Children with SEND

Are you looking to enhance your everyday practice and achieve meaningful inclusion for all children? The Portage Workshop, accredited by the National Portage Association (NPA), offers a certified two-and-a-half-day course designed to help practitioners implement the Portage model in their settings. Through seven modules, you'll explore

strategies such as supporting the development of play, working in partnership with parents and professionals, using clear language, planning for success, and adopting a small steps approach to teaching new skills.

Dates: 2 & 3 March (full days) with a follow-up session on 14 April (via Teams)

Venue: Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Bridge Street, Reading RG1 2LU

Cost: Early Bird offer £30pp

NDNA Championing SEND Programme

Championing SEND is a year-long online training programme designed to boost practitioner confidence and skills with regards to supporting children with SEND. There are 9 steps to work through in the first 9 months, and then a further 3 months to explore the free Resources Section.

Championing SEND programme includes:

- The Role of the SENCO – a recorded virtual course for the SEND Lead and SEND Deputy to complete
- Online coaching course for the SEND Lead and SEND Deputy to complete
- Three online SEND courses created to support staff to develop their practice (up to 25 practitioners can complete each course)
- Staff confidence and learning environment audits and action plans
- Core activities that can be used to support all children attending your setting
- One live webinar as well as access to webinar recordings
- Ongoing phone and email support from an NDNA Early Years Adviser
- A bank of resources including activity ideas, inspirational images, case studies, factsheets, information about pedagogy and practice, malleable play recipes, links to useful websites and articles... and lots more!

The first step settings need to take is to register their interest using this [Expression of Interest Form](#).

Tor from the NDNA is happy to speak with settings on the phone if you have any questions or would like further information. Contact details:
championing.send@ndna.org.uk /01484 624136.

FREE Business Planning Training for Wraparound Providers & Schools

We are pleased to announce a new, free training opportunity designed to help your wraparound services achieve long-term sustainability, quality, and inclusion. Reading Borough Council's Wraparound Team is partnering with [Families First CIC](#) to offer specialised virtual training.

This 2-hour virtual course is designed to support owners, leaders, managers, committee members, and governors with financial responsibility for your Wraparound provision.

To gain the full benefit of this training, providers are required to attend two sessions: one **Introductory Session** (Session 1 or 2) AND the **Reflective Session** (Session

3) You can view all available dates and secure your place by registering with the Families First learning management system.

Click here to register: [Registration for Business Support Sessions](#)

New guide: Potty and Toileting

A [new guide](#), developed by a coalition of early years organisations and backed by the government, provides practical advice on when to introduce potty or toilet use and offers ideas to help all parents. This includes signposting to additional help and information for supporting children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

The guide is published on the [Starting Reception](#) website which aims to help parents practise skills with their child at home in preparation for school.

[The Potty Training Guide - Starting Reception](#).

Mental Health and Wellbeing

A message about flu from the UK Health Security Agency to early years practitioners

On 1 September 2025, the annual flu vaccination programme for preschool children launched. All children aged 2 and 3 years old (on 31 August before flu vaccination starts in the autumn) are eligible for a free flu vaccination in the form of a quick and painless nasal spray. Some children aged 6 months and older in specific clinical risk groups are also eligible for a vaccine. However, not all parents are aware of this, or take up the offer. Please remind parents about the vaccination programme because winter is a peak time of year for seasonal illnesses including flu, to help make sure as many children as possible are protected.

Those working in the early years sector have an important role to play in raising awareness amongst parents about the annual flu vaccination programme. There is information available for practitioners working in early years settings on the nasal flu vaccination and how to prevent the spread of flu in [guidance from UKHSA](#). An information leaflet for parents and carers and a poster for use in settings is [available free to order](#).

Annual vaccination of children helps provide protection to each child and reduces the spread of flu to their families and the wider community, protecting others who are at increased risk of becoming seriously ill from flu. The flu vaccine also promotes a healthy working environment in nurseries and childcare settings by reducing the risk of flu being spread to others including staff.

Preschool children can get the flu vaccine at their GP surgery, and some participating community pharmacies.

Children who can't have the nasal spray for medical or faith reasons can request an alternative flu vaccine that is given as an injection instead, which does not contain any porcine gelatine.

Managing Infectious Diseases in Childcare Settings

To help keep children and staff safe, it's important to follow the latest health protection advice. The UK Government provides clear guidance on managing specific infectious diseases in schools and childcare facilities, including when children should stay home and how to prevent outbreaks.

You can access the full guidance here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-protection-in-schools-and-other-childcare-facilities/managing-specific-infectious-diseases-a-to-z>

Specialist Advisory Support

SEND Advisory Support

SEND Contact Days: First four Tuesdays of the month

Please use this form to request an EY SEND advisory Surgery for support not yet allocated to an Early Years SEND Advisor:

<https://forms.office.com/e/BTrZxDFMck>



This will be reviewed weekly and allocated to the relevant EY SEND and/or Senior SEND Advisor.

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.

Local News

Christmas holiday activities in Reading

The Family Information Service have a [webpage](#) packed full of activities running over the Christmas holiday in the Reading area. Please share with your teams and families.

SEND Local Offer Winter Newsletter

The SEND Local Offer [Winter Newsletter](#) is packed with information, for parent carers, young people and professionals support local families.

Please share with your teams and families.

Children's Centres activities timetables

[Reading Children's Centres](#) welcome all families and provide a wide range of services to give children the best start in life. The timetables of activities taking place over the summer is now available and can be shared with your families.

Safety advice

We wanted to share some advice provided by Thames Valley Police. During the winter months, we'd like to remind you to be aware of your surroundings when leaving work at night. If you are walking to car parks, ensure the route you take is

well lit, leave with colleagues at the same time if possible and remain alert. If you are leaving after working hours, speak to your manager to make safe arrangements.

If you are out late and witness any concerning behaviour, please report it to the Police. The Police and partners are currently promoting project 'vigilant' about staying safe when out and about in Reading at night and offer advice on what to do when faced with a difficult situation. There are a series of videos that were released last week as part of the White Ribbon campaign, [including this one](#) that Reading Borough Council put together with Thames Valley Police.

Training

Under 5's and Childcare Training Offer Spring term 2026

The CPD training offer from the Early Years, SEND and Childcare team for the Spring term is now available. Please see attached.

January training sessions:

Title	Date	Delivery	Cost
Designated Safeguarding Lead – Refresher Email Learning@reading.gov.uk to book	9 January 2026 9.30am-12.30pm	Civic Offices	£33pp
Senior Leadership Network Email earlyyears@reading.gov.uk or register via the SLA to book	13 January 2026 6.30-8.30pm	Civic Offices	Free
Monthly Group Discussions - Interactive Storytelling Complete the booking form for a place	19 January 10-11am	Teams	Free
DASH & MARAC Training – Level 2 (Childminder session) Email CSP@reading.gov.uk to book	19 January 2026 6-9pm	Teams	Free
Wraparound Childcare Providers: Business Planning for Success Email earlyyears@reading.gov.uk or register via the SLA to book	Introductory Session 1 21 January 2026 9.30-11.30am Introductory Session 2 24 February 2026 9.30-11.30am Reflective Session 3 6 May 2026 9.30-11.30am	Teams	Free

Title	Date	Delivery	Cost
Domestic Abuse Awareness Training – Level 1 Email CSP@reading.gov.uk to book	22 January 2026 9.30am-12.30pm	Teams	Free
Speech and Language Support for 3-5yrs and Lets Talk at Home To register interest please complete the attached declaration of interest: https://forms.office.com/e/y1TyhkQ9zM	<u>Initial Meet and Greet</u> 27 January 2026 Followed by 10 further sessions	Teams	Free
Level 3 SEND Award – 12 sessions Email earlyyears@reading.gov.uk or register via the SLA to book	Various dates from January – July 2026	Civic Offices	£600pp
Intensive Interactive 3 day course Email earlyyears@reading.gov.uk or register via the SLA to book	29 January 2026 23 February 2026 27 March 2026 9.30am-3.30pm	Civic Offices	£350pp
SEND Contact Days On the first and third Tuesday of the month contact SEND advisor Samantha on 07970725152. On the second and fourth Tuesday of the month contact SEND advisor Angela on 0118 9376726 or 07973689426.	First to fourth Tuesday of the month	Teams/ telephone	Free
SALT Surgery Book a slot	Third Thursday of the Month	Teams	Free
Early Years and Childcare Advisory Support Request time with an EY advisor	On demand	Teams	Free

Best Start in Life

Data: Understanding the Local Context

Find out more about the context of the local authority and the families living in your area. Collectively the sites include information on population, deprivation, wellbeing, health data and more:

- [Ofsted: explore an area](#)
- [The Berkshire Observatory](#)

Journey to Reception

This page includes helpful tips and local advice for parents as they prepare their child to start the journey to school with confidence. Include within your transition information to families – [Journey to Reception](#)

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: earlyyears@reading.gov.uk.

Previous updates can be found on our [website](#).