

Early Years, SEND and Childcare Briefing 23 January 2026

Dear Provider,

This briefing includes a [Safeguarding audit reminder](#), [DfE apprenticeship case study request](#), [SEND advisory support update](#) and a link to join a [Best Start in Life network session](#).

Safeguarding

Multi disciplinary working

Research in practice have produced a briefing based on the national evaluation of A Better Start that was a project focusing on supporting families with babies and young children through local partnerships in five areas across England, the briefing: [Effective support for families is vital in improving child development and outcomes](#).

Safeguarding Audit

Gentle reminder - Please remember to complete your safeguarding audit by 31 January. If you cannot find the original e-mail links can be requested from Deborah.wood@reading.gov.uk

BFfC training and network offer:

- **Designated Safeguarding Lead – New to the role - £33pp**
3 February, 9.30am-3.30pm, Civic Offices
Email Learning@reading.gov.uk to book
- **Universal Safeguarding Children – FREE**
11 February, 9.30am-12.30pm & 6.30-9.30pm, Civic Offices
[Email](#) or register via the [SLA](#) to book

Leadership

Take energy action

Designed by sustainability and education specialists, this course breaks energy action into five bite-sized, actionable steps. It will help you:

- understand why energy matters
- understand the energy saving journey
- identify energy hotspots
- build a culture of good energy habits
- explore the switch to renewable energy

Sign up [here](#)

Fund your 2026 Projects

New year, new opportunities! If you have an idea for a sustainability project, January is a great time to look for new funding. Here are some that are open right now:

- [National Lottery Awards for All England – Environment](#) (UK) - Grants of up to £20,000 to support local climate action. Deadline: Ongoing, Apply at least 16 weeks before your project starts

- [The Movement Fund](#) (England) - Grants of up to £15,000 available to help sports clubs become more environmentally friendly. Deadline: Ongoing

For more help funding your sustainability projects:

- [Find funding opportunities](#)
- [Find resources that help you complete funding applications](#)
- [See guidance to apply for funding opportunities](#)

Local School Nature Grants

Click [here](#) for information on the Local School Nature Grants Programme and how to apply.

BfFC training and network offer:

- **Designated Safeguarding Leads and Officer Network - FREE**
4 February, 1-2.30pm, Teams
[Email](#) or register via the [SLA](#) to book
- **All Childminder Network – FREE**
5 February, 6.30-8pm, Civic Offices
[Email](#) or register via the [SLA](#) to book

EYFS and Beyond

National Apprenticeship Week 2026 - DfE case study request

As part of the Do Something Big campaign the DfE are looking for early years apprentices who would be willing to share their experiences as part of National Apprenticeship Week 2026. They are keen to showcase stories that highlight how great the early years apprenticeship route is.

Alongside this, they would also welcome introductions to non-apprentice early years professionals across all roles and levels of experience. The DfE are keen to build a bank of case studies of people who are willing to support the campaign by sharing their career journeys. There are different ways to get involved – from media interviews and social media content to simply providing a quote, and these opportunities come up throughout the year, so it would be really helpful to have individuals in mind as and when they arise.

They are also keen to hear from practitioners working in local, independent settings, including smaller providers and childminders, as well as those in larger organisations.

Interested apprentices and wider staff can complete the short case study form (attached), or are welcome to contact **Luke Prescott**, Early years & childcare workforce recruitment, T: 07741354364 | E: luke.prescott@education.gov.uk directly.

SENCO Coffee Morning – change of date

The team have realised that the SENCO coffee morning has been arranged for 31 March which falls during the Easter holidays. We are currently looking at a new date and will notify you all of this when we have it.

BfFC training and network offer:

- **Monthly Group Discussions – Can I Play Now? – FREE**

10 February, 2-3pm, Teams

[Email](#) or register via the [SLA](#) to book

- **Sensory Processing & Hand Massage Workshop - £30pp**

10 February, 12.30-4pm, Civic Offices

[Email](#) to book

- **Wraparound Childcare Providers: Business Planning for Success**

Introductory Session 2: 24 February, 9.30-11.30am, Teams

Click [here](#) to register

Mental Health and Wellbeing

BFfC training and network offer:

- **Therapeutic Thinking – Early Years Module** with Philippa Garn
(£33pp non-attendance fee applies)

2 February, 9.30am-2.30pm, Teams

Specialist Advisory Support

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. These sessions are also available to book for advice on the new invoices/receipts and website FIS changes from January.

SALT Surgery

SALT Surgeries are held on the third Thursday of the month. [Book a slot](#)

SEND Advisory Support

Please note we will no longer be running the SEND surgery contact days on Tuesdays. Instead, we will be offering a call back service which is flexible throughout the week. Please use [this form](#) to request an EY SEND advisory Surgery slot where a member of the team will contact you to arrange a phone call/TEAMS call.

Please use the earlyyearsSEND@reading.gov.uk email address for any general queries and a member of the team will get back to you.

If you need to contact your EY SEND advisor or Senior EY SEND Advisor about a specific allocated child or project please contact them on:

- Angela.Smith@reading.gov.uk
- Samantha.Smith@reading.gov.uk
- Suraksha.Sawant@reading.gov.uk
- Joanna.Binks@reading.gov.uk
- Aimee.Trimmer@reading.gov.uk

Please see attached information about all the different ways you can receive support from the EY SEND Advisory service.

Local News

Rabbit on the Run – Reading Rep Theatre

Rabbit on the Run is a joyful, imaginative live theatre experience, filled with storytelling, music and playful audience interaction. It's designed as a first theatre experience and is ideal for families with young children.

What could it be?! Coming soon a FREE performance for 3 - 6-year-old children from Reading Rep Theatre in our libraries [All libraries - Reading Borough Council](#) Call to book your tickets

Monday 2 February 10:30am Tilehurst Library - 0118 9375112

Tuesday 3 February 10:30am Palmer Park Library - 0118 9375106

Friday 6 February 10:30am Battle Library - 0118 9375100

Saturday 7 February 10:30am Southcote Library - 0118 9375109

Thursday 12 February 10:30am Whitley library - 0118 9375115

Thursday 12 February 1:30pm Caversham Library - 0118 9375103

Friday 13 February 10:30am Central Library - 0118 9375950

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 during the spring is now available and can be shared with your families.

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 on our [website](#).

Best Start in Life

Network session invite

Please see invite to a network session to launch proposal planning for projects that Early Years and Childcare will be leading on to support the Best Start in Life Strategy which includes a specific Home Learning Education initiative. We would welcome a multi-agency oversight and representatives to join us on this working party group that will meet regularly to review and shape the project.

On Wednesday 4 February 2026 at 4pm we have an information sharing session about the project. Use [this link](#) to join:

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](#).

Kind regards

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