

Early Years, SEND and Childcare Briefing

4 August 2026

Welcome to the Early Years, SEND and Childcare briefing delivered to you on a fortnightly basis.

See previous updates on our [EY Childcare & SEND page](#).

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Safeguarding

Safeguarding babies

The Department for Education (DfE) has published the government's response to the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel's national review into the death of baby Victoria Marten published in February 2026. The response sets out how the government intends to implement all eight of the Panel's recommendations to help safeguard babies in England: [Protecting all vulnerable babies better: a government response](#).

See also on NSPCC Learning: [The voice of the infant: expert insight videos](#)

Early Years statutory framework

NSPCC Learning has updated its [CASPAR briefing](#) summarising the Department for Education's Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework, setting out requirements for learning and development, assessment and safeguarding and welfare in early years settings in England. The 2026 edition includes new and updated information on the following areas: sleeping arrangements; concerns about children's safety and welfare; suitable people; and children's screen use. The 2026 edition of the framework is effective from 1 September 2026.

Early years safeguarding training

The Department for Education (DfE) has produced a free, online [early years safeguarding training package](#) in collaboration with the NSPCC. The training covers sections one and two of the safeguarding training Annex C in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework. Designed for those working with children from birth to five, the training provides early years educators with the foundations they need to identify signs of abuse to children in their care and to create a positive safeguarding culture.

Department for Education and Ofsted vodcast on safer sleep in early years settings

The Department for Education and Ofsted have recently published a joint [vodcast on safer sleep in early years settings](#). This includes an overview of the updated wording in the early years foundation stage (EYFS) and then a Q&A with Ofsted colleagues on what this means for inspections.

DfE: Safeguarding guidance for early years providers

The DfE have published new safeguarding guidance for early years providers to help practitioners, managers and childminders understand and apply the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the EYFS.

The new content provides practical information and advice on creating a strong safeguarding culture, recognising concerns early, responding appropriately, and ensuring children are safe, healthy and supported to thrive.

The guidance includes information on:

- the safeguarding responsibilities of early years providers and practitioners
- the role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
- creating and maintaining a strong safeguarding culture
- recognising signs of possible abuse, neglect and harm
- raising, recording and reporting safeguarding concerns
- whistleblowing procedures and when to use them
- safer recruitment and vetting requirements
- working in partnership with parents and carers to keep children safe
- staff training, supervision and ongoing safeguarding practice
- attendance, absence monitoring and information sharing resources, posters and links to further guidance and support

Reading training and network offer:

Safeguarding Workshop 2: Unconscious Bias Date: 9 September

Time: 6.30-8.30pm

Location: Civic Centre, Bridge Street, Reading, RG1 2LU

Cost: FREE

Book your place via email: earlyyears@reading.gov.uk

Leadership

UKHSA Health Protection Briefing Note 2026/024: Cluster of enterovirus meningitis in the West Midlands

Information has been received from UKHSA about two recent outbreaks at nurseries in the West Midlands that have been linked to enterovirus meningitis.

The briefing note highlights a need for relevant settings to be aware of potential clusters of viral meningitis alongside gastroenteritis outbreaks, and that local authorities should ensure that early year settings are aware and, as with all diarrhoea and vomiting outbreaks, are following health protection and infection control guidance including on cleaning, hand hygiene and exclusion measures.

(collated guidance here: [Health protection in children and young people's settings, including education - GOV.UK](#)).

Wraparound & Holiday Childcare Network Meeting September 2026

We invite all primary schools, wraparound and holiday 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 practice and discuss the latest developments in the sector. The session will be held virtually via Teams.

Date: 22 September 2026

Time: 10.30am-12pm Location:

Online via Teams

Cost: FREE

Book here or email: EarlyYears@reading.gov.uk to secure your place!

EYFS and beyond

Updated EYFS frameworks from 1 September 2026

On 13 July 2026 DfE published updated [EYFS frameworks](#) for childminders and group and school-based providers, which apply from 1 September 2026. The main changes from that date are outlined below and represent strengthened safeguarding requirements.

Both EYFS frameworks include safeguarding updates which:

- Bring explicit wording on the safer sleep requirements into the main body of the EYFS
- Prohibit the provision of registered childcare from any premises where a [banned dog breed](#) is kept or is otherwise present
- Require providers to inform Ofsted of allegations of 'harm' (instead of 'serious harm') by anyone living, working, or looking after children at the premises.
- Require enhanced **criminal record checks** for volunteers (including those who are supervised) and prevent new employees from commencing employment before receiving their check.
- Amend the requirements for what providers must tell staff they have to disclose, as part of information that may affect their **suitability to work with children**.
- Have regard to screen use guidance for early years settings as published on 13 July 2026.
- The group and school-based version also require providers of childcare on domestic premises to notify Ofsted or their CMA of **changes to persons aged 16 or over living or working at the premises**. This aligns with existing requirements for childminders.

Other minor clarificatory changes have been made to both frameworks. These are mainly to make the existing requirements clearer for providers. Read in full [Early Years Foundation Stage Framework \(GOV\)](#).

WAC workforce training & backfill fund now available

Reading Borough Council is pleased to launch the Wraparound Care (WAC) workforce training & backfill fund to support WAC providers in strengthening inclusive practice across their provision.

The fund has been developed to release staff to undertake training and aims to support workforce development, SEND awareness, and inclusive practice across wraparound childcare settings.

Funding is available to all primary school-aged wraparound providers to support:

- Staff backfill costs associated with completing online inclusion training
- Inclusive resources to enhance provision
- A new WAC Level 1 Inclusion Award programme (launching later this year).

If you deliver wraparound childcare and would like to learn more about the fund or request an application form, please contact: wraparoundchildcare@reading.gov.uk

Funding is limited and will be allocated subject to eligibility criteria and available budget. We encourage providers to get in touch to find out more.

Celebrate Early Years 2026: Everything Early Years, All Under One Roof

Date: Tuesday 10 November 2026

Venue: Dorney Lake, Court Lane, off Lake End Road, Dorney, Windsor, Berkshire, SL4 6FJ

Join your local Stronger Practice Hub for a free afternoon bringing together everything early years in one place. Whether you're looking for high-quality professional development, practical ideas, local support or the opportunity to network with colleagues, this event has something for everyone.

Your FREE ticket includes access to:

- Evidence-informed workshops
- A wide range of early years exhibition stands
- Opportunities to meet local authority teams, Best Start in Life teams and explore support from Maths Hubs, English Hubs, teaching hubs and more
- Free networking opportunities
- Early years giveaways

Choose from two FREE ticket options:

Full conference experience (12.15–5pm)

- Arrival refreshments and networking
- Exhibition access

- Two workshop sessions
- Complimentary lunch
- Afternoon refreshments

Afternoon Discovery Pass (2.30–5pm)

- Exhibition access
- Networking opportunities
- One workshop session
- Afternoon refreshments

Book here: <https://bit.ly/CelebrateEarlyYears26>

Childminding babies

We have received the following request from the Nuffield Foundation:

My name is Kayla Halls, and I am a researcher working on the Nuffield Foundation-funded project 'Achieving high-quality provision for babies among childminders in England.' You can see a bit more about our project on our website, linked here: [Childmindingbabies.blog](https://childmindingbabies.blog). As part of this research project, we are putting on an engaging, free day of professional learning for childminders working with, or planning to work with 0–2-year-olds. We will be hearing from childminders about their experiences with quality, professional learning, and sense of professionalism.

One of the conferences will be taking place in London, and the registration form is linked here: [Childminding Babies Conference: London](#)

National Year of Reading

The National Literacy Trust have an offer for schools and early years setting for the [National Year of Reading 2026](#) and the [Go All In](#) campaign. Their aim for 2026 is to reimagine reading and (re)engage with reading in all its forms.

Free books at the Cowshed

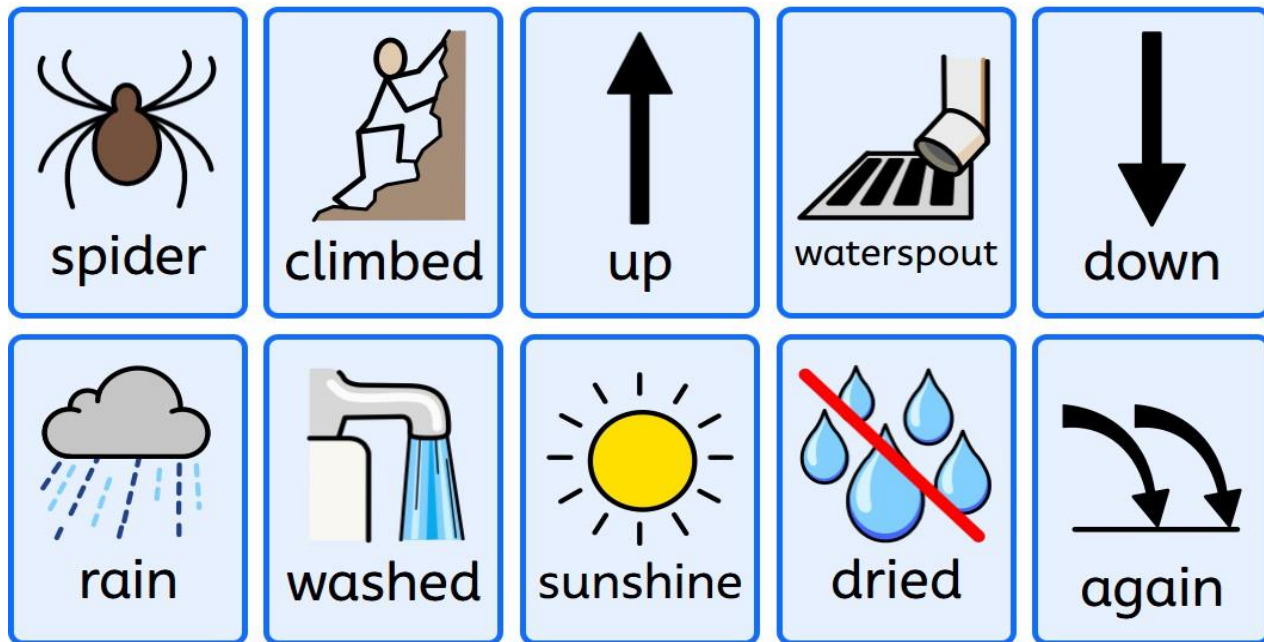
Thanks to the generosity of their supporters, The Cow Shed have surplus books to distribute. On Friday 14 August and Monday 17 August, they are opening their doors to local schools, nurseries, playgroups and other children's organisations to collect books free of charge.

There are hundreds of books for children aged approximately 3-14 years, including titles from well-known authors such as Julia Donaldson, David Walliams, Enid Blyton and Michael Morpurgo. Simply email becky@thecowshed.org to let them know which day you plan to visit.

Signs and symbols of the month

Using the Makaton signs alongside speech, gestures and symbols promotes communication on every level for every child (not just SEND). Part of your language rich interactions and communication environment.

Incy Wincy Spider



Learn the Makaton signs here: [INCY WINCY SPIDER - Singing Hands](#)

Specialist advisory support

Self-refer to the Early Years, SEND and Childcare Service

You can now self-refer to our service for a range of options to meet your needs, including targeted advisory support for leadership, high-quality provision, safe practice and SEND, as well as business advice, bespoke or whole-setting training and project participation.

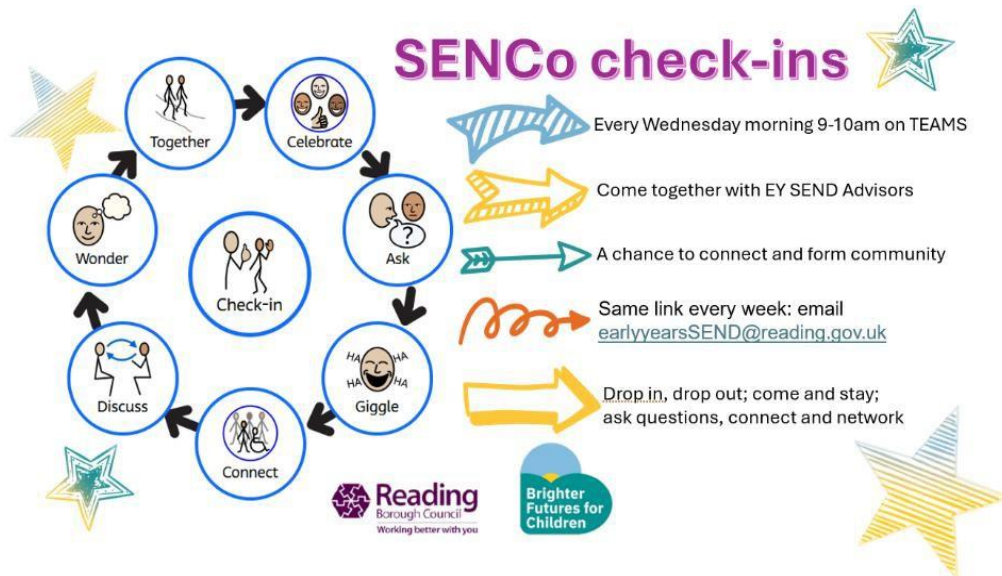
Fill out the form here: [Early Years & Childcare Support – Self Referral Form](#)

EY SEND child referrals

We have made changes to how EY SEND referrals are processed, and individual children will be discussed at a triage meeting. Please ensure you send referrals to EarlyyearsSEND@reading.gov.uk and they will be reviewed by the senior early years send advisors and allocated to a member of the team or added to the waiting list.

Weekly SENCO check-in

Every Wednesday morning, 9-10am. [Join using this link](#)



SEND advisory support

A callback service that runs alongside the SEND referral process. Request a call from a SEND advisor.

Speech and language (SALT) surgery

Third Thursday of the month. [Book a slot](#)

Support for children and families

If you are working with a child or family who may benefit from extra support with development before starting school, with permission you can refer them to the Home Learning Education Programme.

Fill out a form to link with an EYFS & starting school champion here:

[Home Learning Education referral](#)

Best Start in Life

Togetherness - a new programme for practitioners working with children and families

Wokingham, West Berkshire and Reading Councils have introduced Togetherness across Berkshire West through a jointly funded three-year multi-user licence.

This provides **free, unlimited** access to a wide range of online resources for families, alongside **free CPD-accredited training** for practitioners, and could be of particular interest to staff members who work with families and children.

What is Togetherness?

Togetherness (formerly the Solihull Approach) is an evidence-based programme that promotes emotional wellbeing, child development and positive family relationships.

Used nationally and internationally since 1996, it demonstrates strong outcomes for both families and professionals. Courses are developed by clinical psychologists, health specialists, and parents, and are designed to be accessible, reflective and practical.

Benefits for practitioners (free CPD)

The professional licence provides practitioners across Berkshire West with free, unlimited access to specialist Togetherness training modules. These

support trauma-informed, attachment-aware and neurodevelopment-aware practice, with CPD certificates and ongoing learning resources included.

Benefits for families

Families will have free access to more than 15 online pathways, sometimes described as courses, covering:

- Baby bonding and antenatal/postnatal support
- Understanding your child / young person
- Support for additional needs
- Teen brain development and feelings
- Parental wellbeing and relationships

Information is available in multiple languages, including voiceovers and built-in evaluation, and is associated with improvements in:

- Parent–child relationships
- Children’s prosocial behaviour
- Parental confidence
- Reductions in stress, anxiety and behavioural difficulties

Further information can be found on the [Togetherness website](#)

- (PCGT) Access Code: BWFAMILIES
- (PRF) Access Code: BWFAMILIES_PRF

Best Start in Life Reading Family Hubs

Reading Family Hubs provide a wide range of services by connecting families with their community and local support networks. You can view the full timetable of Hub activities

here:

[Reading Directory | Best Start in Life Reading Family Hubs.](#)

Best Start in Life parent hub

This online resource provides parents and carers with trusted information, practical guidance, and support to help children thrive from pregnancy through the early years. Directing families to this site will ensure they can easily access high-quality advice and local services tailored to their needs: [Best Start in Life](#).

Local news

Summer holiday activities in Reading

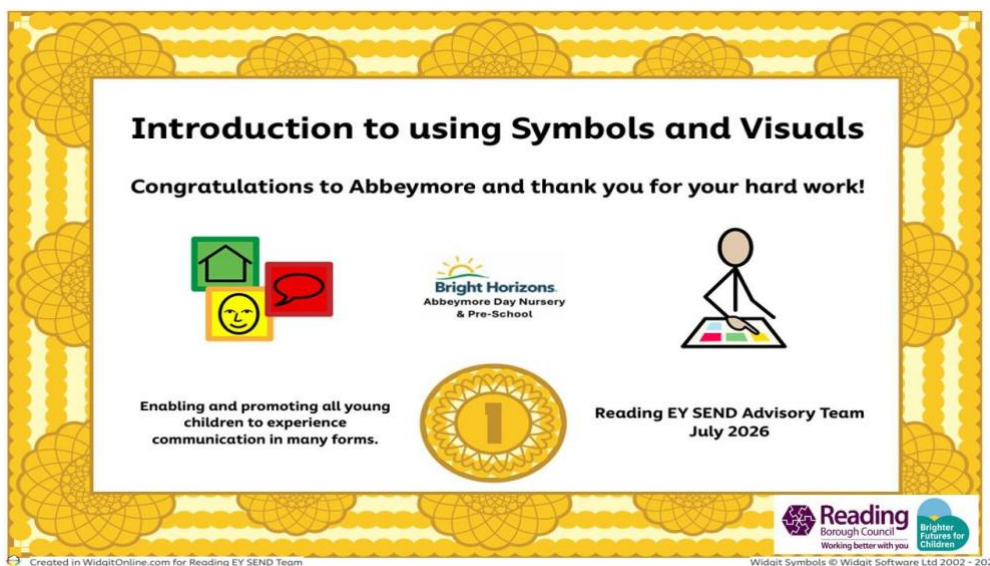
The [summer holiday activities page](#) on the Family Information Service (FIS) website is now live. The page will be updated regularly until the end of August. The page includes [general holiday activities](#) and school holiday [childcare information](#). Please like the FIS [Facebook](#) page to be kept informed of new events, activities and more.

The summer SEND Local Offer summer newsletter 2026 (Issue 41) is now available on the SEND Local Offer, packed with latest news, blogs, short breaks, events and workshops, information for 16+ and much more.

Find out more here: [Reading SEND Local Offer Newsletter Summer 2026](#)

Compliments/celebrations

Well done to Abbeymore Day Nursery for completing the Introduction to using Symbols and Visuals training!



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 send these to us so that we can share your news with the sector!!

Email: earlyyears@reading.gov.uk.

Previous updates can be found on our [EY Childcare & SEND page](#).

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