Early Years, SEND and Childcare Briefing

Date 15 October 2026

This fortnightly briefing contains important updates, information, resources and opportunities relevant to colleagues working across the early years, SEND and childcare sector.

See previous updates and full training programme on our EY Childcare & SEND page.

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Safeguarding

Updated School-Age Childcare (SAC) Guidance: Allergy Safety
The Department for Education has updated its **School-Age Childcare guidance** to strengthen expectations around allergy safety in school-age childcare provision. Schools and providers should ensure that allergy arrangements apply to all school-age childcare provisions, including provision delivered by external providers on school sites.

Providers should ensure that staff involved in preparing or serving food:

- Receive appropriate allergy awareness training.
- Are familiar with the setting's allergy safety procedures.
- Can recognise the signs and symptoms of allergic reactions and anaphylaxis.
- Know how to respond in an emergency.
- Have access to the appropriate medical equipment and information required to support children with allergies.

We encourage all school-age childcare providers to review the updated guidance and consider allergy safety as part of their wider safeguarding, health and wellbeing arrangements.

Further information in the **'Food and nutrition standards'** section of the Delivering School-Age Childcare Guidance

Training and Network offer:

Title	Date and Time	Delivery/Venue	Booking details
Universal Safeguarding Children	**22 October 2026** 6-9pm	Civic Centre	Book here or email to secure your place

Leadership

Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) Early Years and Childcare Market Study
The CMA have randomly selected a number of schools and private providers within the Reading Borough to formally request information. This request is primarily seeking to understand the financial position of different types of childcare providers and the impact of changes in government funding.

Blessed Hugh Faringdon Careers Fair 2027
Hugh Faringdon School will host a Careers Fair on 10 March 2027, 8am-3.05pm and are inviting childcare providers to attend.

The event is designed to give their students valuable insight into the wide range of career pathways available to them, helping them make informed decisions about their future education, training, and employment options.

Please contact R.Gittings@hughfaringdon.org for further information.

Paediatric First Aid
If you would like to fill any spaces that you have on any booked Paediatric First Aid courses we are happy to advertise them to other childcare settings, please email earlyyears@reading.gov.uk and include how many spaces, times, dates and cost.

Training and network offer:

Title	Date and Time	Delivery/Venue	Booking details
Wraparound and Holiday Club Business Support Training (Families First CIC)	**21 October 2026** 9.30am-12.30pm or 6.30-9.30pm	Online via Zoom	Book here for: Morning Session or Evening Session

EYFS and Beyond

Reading SEND Local Offer - Annual Feedback Survey 2026
SEND Local Offer Annual Survey – 2026 - 2027 (October 2026) – Fill in form



Let us know what you like, what you want improved, or just keep as it is!
This will help us further improve the information, accessibility, usage and will assist us in developing and improving **Reading 's SEND Local Offer** working in partnership with parent carers, children, young people and practitioners. **Please spare a few minutes to complete this short survey using the following link above or use the QR code below.**



Survey ends on Saturday 31 October the results will be published on the SEND Local Offer.

We will be offering a £50 gift voucher to one lucky winner once the survey has closed, if you would like to enter for the free draw, please leave your email address and contact number at the end of the survey.

BookTrust webinar: Starting Strong: Enabling Conditions for Early Years Reading
BookTrust, the UK's largest children's reading charity, is hosting a webinar as part of Story Sharer Week on **22 October 2026 (10-11am)**. The session will explore the evidence behind successful early years reading practices and provide practical ideas for supporting families to make shared reading a regular and enjoyable part of home life.

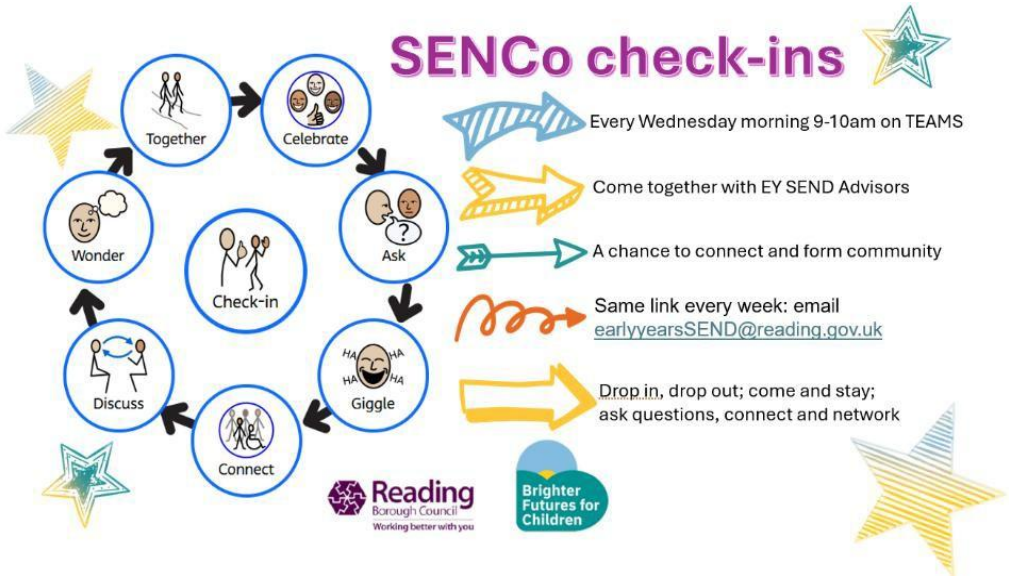
World Book Day 4 March 2027
Childminders are still able to sign up to receive a digital token for World Book Day, please follow the instructions here.

Specialist Advisory Support

Self-refer to the Early Years, SEND and Childcare Service
Whether you provide **Early Years, Wraparound Childcare, or Holiday Childcare**, you can now **self-refer** to our service for a range of support options. This includes 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.

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.

Best Start in Life

Supervised Tooth Brushing
A huge thank you to **Community Dental Health** for attending our Leadership Network last week and sharing the Supervised Toothbrushing Programme, including practical guidance on how it can be successfully implemented within early years group settings. Further details attached.

We would also like to thank **Kennet Day Nursery** for providing an inspiring overview of how they have embedded supervised toothbrushing into their daily practice. It was invaluable to hear about their journey, the practical considerations involved, and the positive impact the programme is having on children's oral health, independence, and wellbeing.

Ita, Nursery Manager at Kennet Day Nursery shared an overview of their journey:

In September, the Kingfishers began their toothbrushing journey as part of promoting good oral health habits and supporting children's overall health and wellbeing.

Implementation
The process began with a telephone consultation with the Community Dental Service (CDS) to discuss the number of children participating, resource requirements, arrangements for staff training, and the identification of a nursery lead for the programme.

Two members of staff attended an online training session delivered by CDS, which covered programme expectations, potential challenges, case study examples, and provided opportunities to ask questions.

Following this, Community Dental Nurses Lily and Amy visited the nursery to introduce the programme to the children. They spoke about the importance of brushing teeth, demonstrated effective toothbrushing techniques, and supported the children during an initial brushing session.

Each child was provided with their own toothbrush, clearly identified by colour, symbol and initials. Toothbrushes are stored hygienically in a labelled rack, with matching symbols to ensure correct identification.

Daily Toothbrushing Routine

- **Step 1:** Thirty minutes after lunch, children come inside, wash their hands, and sit at the table.
- **Step 2:** Each child is given a paper towel with a smear of toothpaste placed in the top corner.
- **Step 3:** Children are given their toothbrushes and encouraged to swipe the toothpaste onto their brush.
- **Step 4:** A two-minute timer is set on the tablet and the children brush their teeth.
- **Step 5:** When the timer sounds, children place their toothbrushes on the table and use the paper towel to wipe their mouths.

Review After One Month
After one month of implementation, the programme has been very successful, with only minor challenges encountered.

Initially, finding the most suitable time of day for toothbrushing required some trial and error. However, a consistent routine has now been established whereby children come in after lunch, tidy away, brush their teeth, and then return to the garden. The predictable routine has supported children's independence and participation and made it less challenging for staff as the room is already set up from lunch time.

One challenge we experienced was an increased use of toothbrushes due to children attempting to help tidy them away, which created a risk of cross-contamination. To address this, children are now reminded at the beginning of each session to leave their toothbrushes on the table when they have finished brushing. This has significantly reduced the issue.

Some children initially chose to observe rather than participate. However, through watching their peers and becoming familiar with the routine, they gradually gained confidence and now take part fully in the sessions.

Positive Outcomes

- Children have developed a strong understanding of the importance of toothbrushing and oral hygiene.
- The majority of children engage enthusiastically and look forward to the daily sessions.
- Children demonstrate increasing independence by following the routine and managing their own resources appropriately.
- Peer modelling has encouraged reluctant children to participate and build confidence.
- Toothbrushing has become a well-established and valued part of the daily routine.
- Parents have provided positive feedback, commenting on their children's enthusiasm for brushing their teeth and the impact the programme has had on encouraging good oral health habits at home.

Impact

The toothbrushing programme has had a positive impact on children's health awareness, independence, and self-care skills. It has successfully embedded healthy habits into the daily routine and strengthened partnerships with parents in promoting good oral health practices both in nursery and at home. Overall, the programme has been well received by children, staff, and families and continues to be a successful addition to the Kingfishers' daily provision.

Parents as Partners: Mental Health and Wellbeing Best Practice Guide

A new **Parents as Partners: Mental Health and Wellbeing Best Practice Guide** has been published, drawing on evidence and learning from the A Better Start (ABS) partnerships. The guide highlights why supporting parents' mental health and wellbeing is so important for children and families and provides practical examples.

Best Start in Life Reading Family Hubs

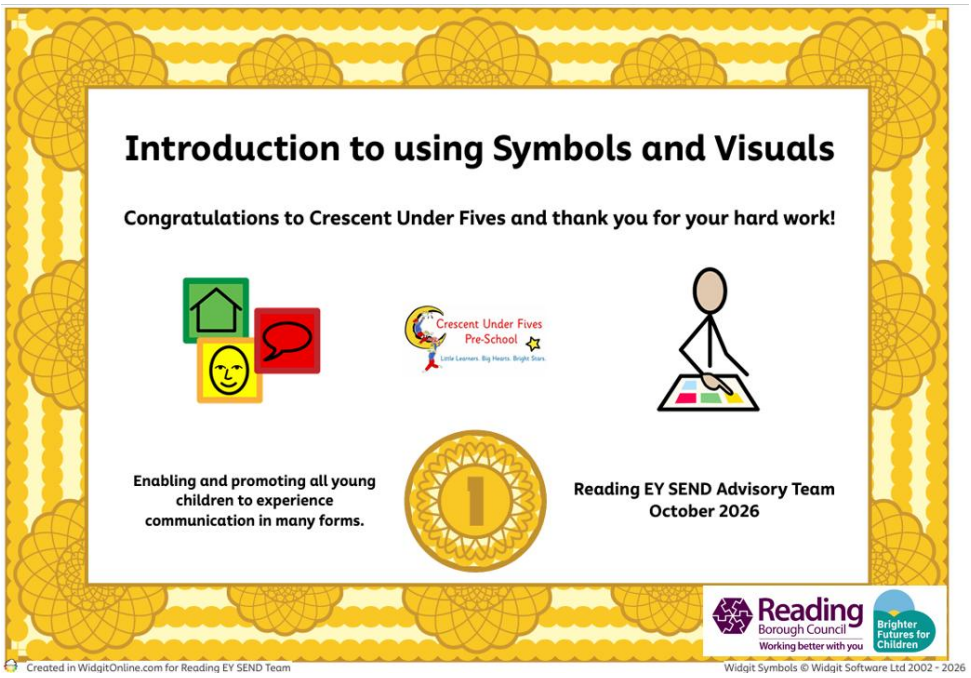
Reading Family Hubs provide a wide range of services by connecting families with their community and local support networks. You can view the full timetable of Hub activities here.

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.

Compliments/celebrations

Congratulations to Crescent Under Fives Pre-school on 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.