

Early Years, SEND and Childcare Briefing
4 September 2026

Dear Provider,

Welcome to the latest Early Years, SEND and Childcare Briefing. We hope you have had an enjoyable summer and managed to take some well-deserved time away from work to rest and recharge.

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

Safeguarding

Safeguarding Legislation Updates

Safeguarding remains everyone's responsibility. The 2026 reforms, detailed in earlier briefings, place a stronger emphasis on early identification of harm, robust safer recruitment, effective multi-agency working, safer sleep, online safety, and ensuring that all children receive support that is inclusive, anti-discriminatory and child centred.

This is a reminder that you should review:

- Safeguarding and child protection policies
- DBS and safer recruitment procedures
- Volunteer management processes
- Sleep policies and risk assessments
- Online safety and screen-use policies
- Domestic abuse awareness and referral pathways

Staff understanding of local safeguarding thresholds and referral processes

Private Fostering

All professionals have a responsibility to make sure all privately fostered children are well cared for, safe, and that their carers are supported.

If you are aware of a Private Fostering arrangement or know of one that is due to start, please alert this service:

Email: CSPOA@reading.gov.uk or familyandfriendsduty@reading.gov.uk

Telephone: 0118 937 4451

The attached poster is for your use.

Safer sleep

In the recent Foundation Years [vodcast](#), Ofsted representatives provide clarity on the use of coracles and the reason why they are not to be used for babies.

Designated Safeguarding Lead Training

The Local Authority is in the process of moving to a new model of safeguarding partnership arrangement, this has meant that a lot of the processes, training and thresholds are currently under review.

Reading will not be offering a new to DSL or the refresher course during the Autumn term.

In the meantime, several professional organisations, including the [Out of School Alliance](#), [Early Years Alliance](#), [Coram PACEY](#) and [NDNA](#), offer DSL training. If you are a member of any of these organisations, you may be able to access training free of charge as part of your membership benefits.

The Early Years, Childcare and SEND team will be holding a termly DSL Network on 19 November, 6.30-8.30pm where local information and updates will be shared.

Prevent Training

New [dates](#) have been added for the Department for Education (DfE) Prevent duty training package, designed to support staff working within the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) to understand their responsibilities and the importance of the Prevent duty.

Further down the webpage, you will also find training specifically for Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs), helping them to understand their responsibilities and strengthen their knowledge of the Prevent duty.

BFfC 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 Here](#) or [email](#) to secure your place

Leadership

Important-Updating Family Information Service

We have been asked to remind childminders to review and update their vacancy information and Local Offer details on the Family Information Service (FIS) directory. Keeping this information accurate and up to date helps parents make informed childcare choices and enables the Family Information Service to provide effective support and brokerage for families seeking childcare.

We know that parents often use the directory as their first source of information. When profiles are outdated or incomplete, families may assume that places are unavailable or that the information is no longer being maintained, which can discourage them from making contact. Keeping your details current helps to promote your provision positively and ensures families have confidence in the information they find.

Families First Business Support Training

Reading Borough Council's Wraparound Team has partnered with [Families First CIC](#) to offer a free 2-hour virtual business support session for wraparound and holiday club leaders, managers, committee members, and governors.

The training focuses on sustainability, inclusion, financial planning, workforce development, and meeting the needs of families, including children with SEND. Sessions are delivered live via Zoom and run twice each term (daytime and evening options available).

The next sessions will be on:

- Wednesday 21 October: 9.30-11.30am
- Wednesday 21 October: 6.30-8.30pm

If not already done so, create your training account at: [Families First - Registration Reading](#). Registration links will be released closer to the session dates.

BFFC training and network offer:

- **Wraparound & Holiday Childcare Network Meeting September 2026**
Date: 22 September 2026
Time: 10.30am-12pm
Location: Online via Teams
Cost: FREE
[Book Here](#) or [email](#) to secure your place

Join our next network meeting to hear the latest **safeguarding, legislation, SEND, funding, Ofsted, and sector updates**. A great opportunity to connect with colleagues, share good practice, and stay informed about developments across wraparound and holiday childcare provision. We encourage providers to share this invitation with their wider teams to ensure important information and learning are embedded across their provision. Please see the attached agenda for full details.

EYFS and Beyond

Reminder: Updated EYFS frameworks from 1 September 2026

On 13 July 2026 the DfE published updated [EYFS Frameworks](#) for childminders and group and school-based providers, which apply from **1 September 2026**. The Ofsted [inspection toolkits](#) have also been updated.

Reminder: 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.

Supervised Toothbrushing Training

Who is this training for? Teachers, teaching assistants, nursery practitioners, and support staff working with children aged 3 to 5 years who wish to begin supervised toothbrushing in their setting. Please see the attached flyer for further information and details of how to book on.

Best Start in Life – Journey to Reception Programme Update

Clare Barber & Noelle Freeman (EY & Starting School Champions) had a busy Summer term & holiday period supporting many families with children preparing to start school this September. The project continues, with current focus now on supporting children starting Reception in 2027. If you are working with a child who may benefit from extra support with their development before starting school, you can refer them to the Home Learning Education programme (with consent) using our online form: [Home Learning Education programme referral](#)

See more info on the Home Learning Education Programme [here](#).

We are also delighted to welcome 2 new EY Advisors to the team, to work within the Journey to Reception project. **Maria Fahy & Chloe Brown** joined the team this week and will be focused specifically on supporting Early Years providers with developing provision for 3–4-year-old children's development, particularly those facing most disadvantage, as they transition to Reception. Maria & Chloe will also work closely with Clare & Noelle in their work alongside Family Hubs, Health teams & Schools to support a co-ordinated approach to transition. We will share more details on how Maria & Chloe will support providers soon. In the meantime, if you would like to express interest in receiving targeted EY Advisory support for your cohort of children transitioning to school in 2027, please use the [Self-Referral form](#), selecting 'Project participation' and 'Journey to Reception project'.

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 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

Please can you share the attached posters and postcards with your families and staff, they include child development information as well as details for free courses with QR and access codes. If you would like some hard copies, please let me know at jayne.clark@reading.gov.uk.

National Year of Reading - Autumn term resources from National Literacy Trust

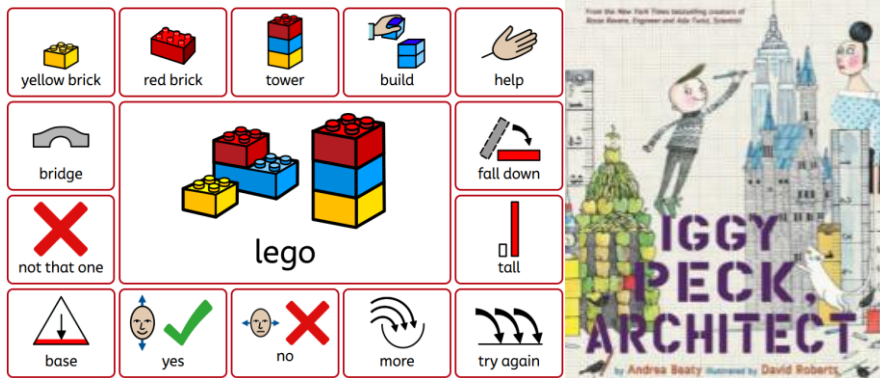
Sign up or download resources for the Autumn term, including an opportunity to register for a forthcoming Early Years Professional Webinar focused on Parent Partnership [Early Years: Opening the door to reading at home | National Literacy Trust](#)

Find out more on the resources available from National Literacy Trust [here](#).

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.

Adding communication boards, alongside non-fiction books, with your resources are a wonderful way to increase symbol recognition through sustained shared play interests.



BFFC training and network offer:

- ****Few spaces remaining** Introduction to Intensive Interaction – 2 part workshops**
Date: 15 & 22 September 2026
Time: 3.30-5pm
Location: Teams
Cost: FREE (£60pp cancellation/non-attendance fee applies)
[Book Here](#) or [email](#) to secure your place

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Compass Recovery College - Free wellbeing workshops and drop-ins open to everyone, including professionals and families

Compass Recovery College are delighted to share their [Autumn 2026 prospectus](#), that includes a wide range of free mental health, wellbeing and recovery-focused workshops, drop-ins and community activities taking place across Reading between September and December.

This term's programme offers something for a wide range of interests and experiences, including workshops on emotional wellbeing, chronic pain and mental health, menopause and wellbeing, mindfulness, yoga, gardening, cooking, creativity and photography, alongside our popular Lunch & Learn sessions designed to support people to build knowledge, confidence, resilience and practical wellbeing skills.

BFFC training and network offer:

- **VR Trauma – FULLY BOOKED**
Date: 11 September 2026
Time: 10am-12pm
Location: Civic Centre
Cost: FREE (£60pp cancellation/non-attendance fee applies)

Specialist Advisory Support

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

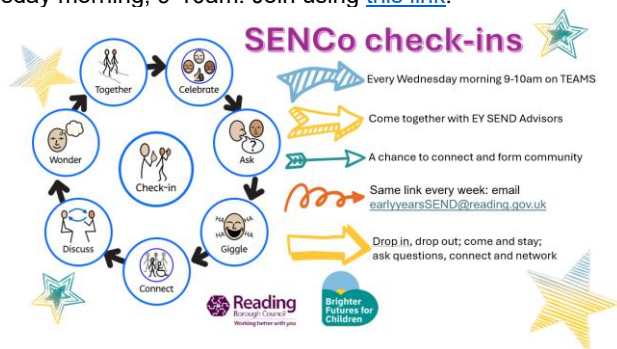
Whether you provide **Early Years, Wraparound Childcare, or Holiday Childcare**, you can now **self-refer** to our service for a range of support options. This includes targeted advisory support for leadership, high-quality provision, safe practice and SEND, as well as business advice, bespoke or whole-setting 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 - [Home Learning Education - Referral](#)

Best Start in Life

Children's screen use in early years settings

[Screen use guidance for early years settings](#) builds on the guidance for parents published earlier this year and has been produced with contributions from sector

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Commented [GR2]: [@Allen, Vicki](#) is this still in place alongside the referral service?

experts including the Digital Standards Early Years Action Group and Early Years Screen Time Advisory Group.

BBC CBeebies parenting resources to support pre-school children

[BBC CBeebies Parenting resources and content](#) can be shared with parents and caregivers to support pre-school children as they prepare to start their adventure in early years settings or school.

Early years professionals can join free monthly [Champions Training sessions](#) to find out more about CBeebies Parenting and how you can use the information with families. Visit the [Professionals section](#) for resources to print and share, and [sign up](#) to the monthly newsletter for regular updates. If you want to contact the team directly for more information, please email CBeebiesparenting@bbc.co.uk

Potty Training

A new [NHS Best Start in Life 'Potty Training' webpage](#), with practical advice covering everything from recognising when a child needs the toilet to managing clothing, wiping, flushing and washing hands is available to share with families.

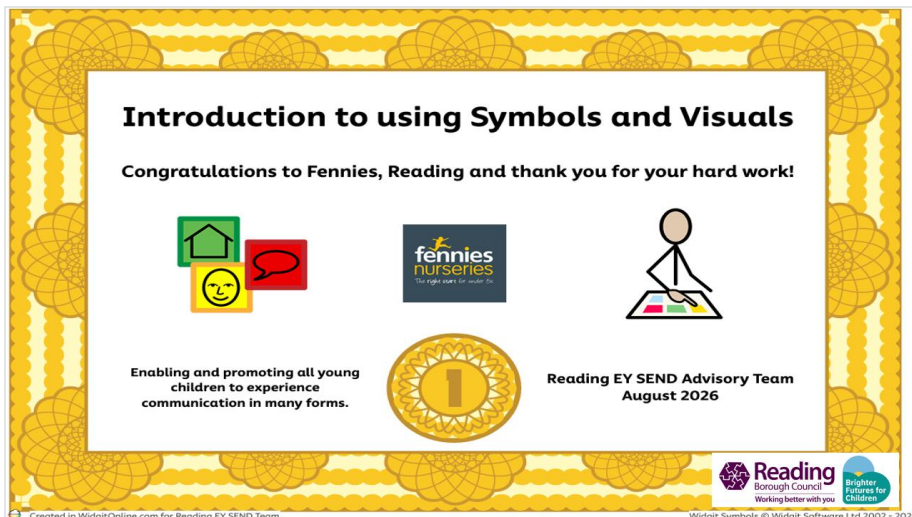
At its heart is a short film, '[Toilet Training Talks](#)', featuring Reception teacher Georgia Lucas and TV doctor Dr Emily MacDonagh. Filmed in a primary school toilet, the light-hearted film shares advice and reassures parents that progress takes patience and every child develops at their own pace.

Best Start in Life Reading Family Hubs

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](#).

Compliments/Celebrations

Congratulations to the team at Fennies Reading on successfully completing the Introduction to Using Symbols and Visuals training. Thank you for your commitment to developing inclusive practice and supporting communication and understanding for all children.



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 [website](#).