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Guidance

# Early years experts and mentors programme

Information on the DfE early years COVID-19 recovery programme, which offers leadership support, coaching and mentoring.

From: [Department for Education](#)

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## Applies to England

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## Background

In October 2021, Department for Education (DfE) [announced](#) that £153 million would be invested to strengthen teaching in the early years and address the impact of the pandemic on the youngest children. Together with the previously announced Nuffield Early Language programme (£17 million), and further investment (£10 million) in the second phase of the professional development programme, this represents an investment of up to £180 million of recovery support in the early years sector.

These proposals build on the reforms to the early years foundation stage (EYFS) to accelerate and embed real change for young children, which is more important than ever in light of the impact of the pandemic.

One of the ways DfE supports early years practitioners is through the early years experts and mentors programme.

## About the programme

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## Related content

[Early years education recovery programme](#)

[Childminder mentor programme](#)

[Early years stronger practice hubs](#)

[NELI \(Nuffield Early Language Intervention programme\)](#)

The programme offers early years support, delivered either face to face or virtually, by trained experts and mentors to:

- early years practitioners
- leaders
- whole settings

The offer to early years settings includes:

- leadership support
- coaching for leaders
- mentoring for practitioners
- whole-setting support, depending on a setting's priorities and needs

The programme was piloted in Lancashire and West Yorkshire, and the North of England between April and July 2022.

## **Full rollout**

The experts and mentors programme was rolled out nationally across England from September 2022, covering academic years 2022 to 2023 and 2023 to 2024.

Early years professionals fulfil the roles of:

- mentors, to provide online or remote support to early years practitioners as they complete a new online child development training package
- experts, to provide face-to-face support to leaders of settings
- area leads, to act as a first point of contact in their region for experts and mentors, and to provide face-to-face support to setting leaders

All roles focus on helping children recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, including narrowing the gap between disadvantaged children and others.

All area leads, experts and mentors have:

- at least 3 years' experience and be currently working in an early years setting that is Ofsted rated 'good' or 'outstanding' (or an equivalent independent school inspection rating)
- a level 6 or above early years qualification

Area leads, experts and mentors may work in:

- schools
- nursery schools
- private, voluntary or independent (PVI) nurseries
- other early years settings
- early years roles within local authorities or universities

Applications for the roles of area lead, expert and mentor are now closed, but the application window may re-open if further recruitment is required.

## How settings can apply for support

Early years settings can now self-refer and request the support of an expert and mentor from the programme using the [application form](#) on the Pen Green Centre website.

## Childminder mentor programme

The experts and mentors programme supports private, voluntary or independent (PVI) nursery settings, maintained nursery schools and school-based nurseries.

DfE have now expanded this offer of support to childminders.

More information on how childminders can apply for the programme is available at [childminder mentor programme](#).

## Queries

Submit any questions you have about the programme to

[eoi.EYRECOVERY@education.gov.uk](mailto:eoi.EYRECOVERY@education.gov.uk)

## How we will use your data

[Privacy notice for early years COVID-19 recovery: experts and mentors programme](#) (PDF, 154 KB, 4 pages)

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