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[Department
for Education](#)

Guidance

Early years education recovery programme: supporting the sector

Updated 15 March 2023

Applies to England

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Background

The government is providing a package of up to £180 million for workforce training, qualifications and support and guidance for the early years sector to help address the impact of the pandemic on the youngest and most disadvantaged children.

The programmes are designed for early years:

- practitioners
- leaders
- settings, including private, voluntary and independent organisations; childminders; school-based nurseries; and maintained nursery schools

Designed to support all areas of the early years sector, the package offers training in:

- [child development](#)
- [communication and language, early mathematics, and personal, social and emotional development](#) through the third phase of our professional development programme
- [Nuffield Early Language Intervention](#)
- [leadership of settings](#) with a new national professional qualification in early years leadership
- [supporting caregivers in the home learning environment](#)

Additional funding for qualifications:

- [graduate-level specialist training leading to early years teacher status](#)
- [accredited level 3 early years special educational needs coordinator \(SENCO\) qualification](#)
- [a review of the level 3 qualification and criteria](#)

Support and guidance to all early years settings through:

- [stronger practice hubs](#)
- [expert coaches and mentors](#)

Continuing professional development (CPD)

Overview

As part of the early years education recovery package, there are 5 offers, which focus on supporting with continuing professional development:

- [early years child development training](#)
- [professional development programme phase 3 \(PDP3\)](#)
- [Nuffield Early Language Intervention \(NELI\)](#)
- [national professional qualification in early years leadership \(NPQEYL\)](#)
- [home learning environment \(HLE\)](#)

Each programme is designed to address a different need within the early years sector.

Early years child development training

Overview

Early years child development training is an online programme designed to help practitioners improve their knowledge and understanding of child development so they can support children in early education settings.

Who will benefit

The training is designed primarily for:

- early years practitioners in nurseries and private, voluntary and independent (PVI) settings; nursery managers; and childminders
- teachers of early years in school-based nurseries
- mentees within the [experts and mentors programme](#)

However, the training is available to anyone who will benefit, including parents and carers.

Programme content

Users will work through a number of online interactive modules related to child development. Modules will focus on:

- Module 1: Understanding child development
- Module 2: Understanding brain development
- Module 3: Personal, social and emotional development
- Module 4: Supporting language development in the early years
- Module 5: Supporting physical development in the early years
- Module 6: Supporting holistic development
- Module 7: Mathematics
- Module 8: Planning inclusive learning
- Module 9: Effective observation and assessment
- Module 10: Supporting individual needs

Programme length

There will be 10 modules and each module is anticipated to take 1.5 to 2 hours to complete. However, this will depend on the individual needs of each user.

The training is flexible, and users can save their progress and return to the point at which they left off at any time.

Programme availability

The first 4 modules of the training are now available. Subsequent modules will be

added to the service throughout the remainder of the 2022 to 2023 academic year.

Programme funding

This programme is free to access.

How to access the training

You can now access the [first 4 modules of the training](#).

Subsequent modules will be added during the 2022 to 2023 academic year.

The training will continue to be developed based on sector feedback.

Professional development programme phase 3 (PDP3)

Overview

The professional development programme (PDP) provides early years practitioners with training on communication and language, early mathematics, and personal, social and emotional development.

PDP has been designed to ensure early years practitioners have the skills they need to support young children's development in the areas that make the most difference to long-term development and attainment. PDP3 builds on the success of PDP1 and PDP2, and has been made available to all local authorities in England through a mix of self-study learning and online webinars.

Who will benefit

PDP 3 is available to practitioners nationally, targeted at reaching disadvantaged children. PDP3 is designed to support level 3 qualified practitioners who have not already completed PDP1 or PDP2.

Programme content

The programme covers:

- early communication and language
- early mathematics
- personal, social and emotional development (PSED)

Programme length

It is expected that practitioners will complete the 3 modules in around 7 to 8 months.

Programme availability

PDP3 launched in February 2023. You can find further details and register your interest on the [early years professional development programme website](#).

Programme funding

This programme is free to access. Support with backfill costs is available to settings via their local authority to help practitioners complete the training.

How to apply

Local authorities will provide details of eligible settings to the PDP3 delivery partner. Eligible settings will then be able to nominate suitable practitioners for the training.

Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI)

Overview

The Nuffield Early Language Intervention is a programme designed for reception-age children needing additional support with their speech and language development and early literacy skills. The programme is delivered by trained staff to small groups of pupils and is proven to help children make up to 3 months' additional progress.

Who will benefit

All state-funded schools with a reception class have been invited to apply for the programme, with priority given to schools with a high proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals.

Programme content

A trained teaching assistant provides short, small-group and individual training sessions to around 3 to 6 children for 20 weeks.

Programme length

The programme lasts for 20 weeks.

Programme availability

A [list of schools](#) registered to deliver NELI is available.

Programme funding

NELI training and resources free to access for participating schools.

National professional qualification in early years leadership (NPQEYL)

Overview

The national professional qualification in early years leadership helps early years leaders develop their skills in managing and leading high-quality early years education.

National professional qualifications are designed to support the professional development of teachers and school leaders. This success is now being expanded to include the early years sector.

The NPQEYL will help participants gain confidence and develop skills in:

- delivering high-quality early education and care
- organisational management and staff development
- giving constructive feedback to parents and carers
- working with children who have additional and special educational needs

Who will benefit

The NPQEYL is aimed at leaders qualified to at least level 3 with a full and relevant qualification who are, or are aspiring to be:

- managers of private, voluntary and independent nurseries
- headteachers of school-based or maintained nurseries
- childminders with leadership responsibilities

Programme content

The NPQEYL content framework was developed in consultation with an expert advisory group and with input from a wide range of early years leaders, experts and academics as well as being independently assessed by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF).

The NPQEYL covers 7 modules:

- culture
- child development, curriculum and assessment
- additional and special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)
- professional development
- organisational management
- implementation
- working in partnership

Following these modules, participants must complete a summative assessment and answer a short, assessed case study question.

Programme length

The NPQEYL requires a minimum of 75 hours learning, delivered over approximately 18 months. You can expect to spend 1 to 2 hours a week on the NPQ and will need to engage with at least 90% of the course to pass.

Programme availability

The NPQEYL is being delivered nationally through 7 delivery partners from February 2023. The course is designed to be completed flexibly around existing commitments and will use a mix of face-to-face, online and self-study sessions.

Programme funding

Early years practitioners and leaders working in the following settings in England will be eligible for scholarship funding from the Department for Education (DfE) for the NPQEYL:

- childcare providers registered on the Ofsted early years register, providing childcare on domestic and non-domestic premises
- childminders registered on the Ofsted early years register, or registered with an Ofsted-registered childminder agency, caring for early years children
- in a maintained nursery school in England
- in a preschool class that's part of a school in England

Participants not eligible for scholarship funding can still undertake the NPQEYL and should contact their local lead provider or delivery partner directly for more information.

How to apply

To apply for the NPQEYL, participants who have a line manager or work in a setting with a headteacher should speak to them about getting support to do an NPQ and for help in choosing a training provider. Other participants can progress straight to choosing their own training provider.

There are currently 6 lead providers for the NPQEYL:

- [Ambition Institute](#)
- [Education Development Trust](#)
- [School-Led Network](#)
- [Teacher Development Trust](#)
- [Teach First](#)
- [UCL Institute of Education](#)

Once participants have chosen a suitable provider, they can [register for the NPQYEYL](#).

Home learning environment (HLE)

Overview

The home learning environment is where much of a child's formative learning and development takes place and is a key influence on a child's language development and social and emotional growth.

Recognising the importance of the home learning environment, DfE is funding local authorities to train practitioners to support parents in talking, playing and reading more with their children, both in and around the home, to help improve cognitive skills and future attainment.

Who will benefit

Local authorities will identify settings in their area to receive the training in order to ensure support reaches the families who would benefit most. The training is aimed primarily at practitioners who already have some experience of interacting with and supporting parents and carers, although other staff may also be eligible.

Programme content

Programme content will be tailored to local needs. Each local authority will commission evidence-based training in response to analysis of the needs of local families and what other provision is available.

Programme length

HLE training generally takes between half a day and 3 days, depending on the provider, and can be a mix of online and face-to-face training.

Programme availability

HLE will be delivered in the 75 local authorities participating in the [Family Hubs](#) programme, having been launched online in November 2022.

Programme funding

This programme is free to access. Additional support for out-of-hours work and backfill will be at the discretion of the local authority, training provider and setting.

How to apply

Settings where training will be available will be identified by local authorities based on the families who most need support. If you are interested in undertaking this training, contact your local [Family Hub](#).

Qualifications

Overview

As part of the early years education recovery package, there are 2 offers, which focus on supporting with gaining qualifications.

- [early years initial teacher training \(EYITT\)](#)
- [special educational needs coordinator \(SENCO\)](#)

These qualifications are for:

- graduates
- undergraduates
- experienced practitioners
- designated SENCOs

We are also reviewing the level 3 early years qualifications criteria.

Early years initial teacher training (EYITT)

Overview

Early years initial teacher training (EYITT) is funded graduate-level specialist training leading to early years teacher status.

Who will benefit

EYITT is designed for those who wish to specialise in working with babies and young children, from birth to 5 years.

There are 4 potential entry routes:

- graduate entry route - graduates can take a postgraduate course

- graduate employment-based route - graduates can complete EYITT in the workplace if they are employed in a setting
- undergraduate route - undergraduates can gain early years teacher status in the third year of their undergraduate degree
- assessment-only route - experienced practitioners can self-fund an assessment-only route, this can be suitable for practitioners who have gained qualifications overseas

Programme content

Training is a mixture of learning at university and on a placement in a setting.

Programme length

EYITT courses can range from 3 months to 3 to 4 years, depending on the route chosen.

Programme availability

EYITT is available nationally through accredited providers with the timetable reflecting the academic year.

Programme funding

Funding is available for the graduate-based and graduate-employment-based EYITT courses. There are also bursaries and employer incentives.

DfE has substantially expanded the number of funded places for EYITT over the next 2 academic years (2022 to 2023 and 2023 to 2024) as part of the early years recovery programme.

How to apply

Prospective trainees can apply direct by contacting one of the [accredited providers](#) in their area.

Level 3 special educational needs coordinator (SENCO)

Overview

Early diagnosis of special educational needs (SEND) is essential to ensuring a child has the support they need throughout their education.

This training leads to an accredited level 3 early years SENCO qualification.

Who will benefit

The programme is aimed at SENCOs working in group-based and childminder settings and those due to take up the role of SENCO in these settings.

Programme content

The level 3 SENCO qualification contains units on:

- the role and responsibilities of the SENCO in early years (including guidance, partnership and inclusion)
- strategies and techniques for supporting children and families

The learning is completed through a combination of:

- online taught sessions
- online study sessions
- group discussions
- reflective practice

More details on the programme content, including a brochure, are available on the [Best Practice Network](#) website.

Programme length

The qualification takes 34 hours, including 24 hours of guided learning, to be completed within a 4-month period, with the option of extending the time to 6 months to allow for flexibility to fit around self-employment or part-time working arrangements.

Programme availability

The training is available nationally, with targeting in disadvantaged areas.

Programme funding

The programme is fully funded for everyone who is offered a place.

How to apply

Application is through our delivery partner [Best Practice Network](#).

Level 3 qualifications review

Overview

The review will improve the quality and rigour of the level 3 early years criteria, through public consultation and engagement with the sector and other stakeholders such as awarding organisations, and analysis of new and available data.

Who will benefit

By reviewing the level 3 qualification, we are aiming to provide a higher-quality criteria for early years qualifications, leading to better training for early years educators. This will impact on individual settings and the sector as a whole as we look to improve the quality of early years education.

Support and guidance

Overview

As part of the early years education recovery package, there are 2 offers, which focus on providing support and guidance for staff and settings.

Support and guidance includes:

- [stronger practice hubs](#)
- [experts and mentors](#)

Stronger practice hubs

Overview

[Stronger practice hubs](#) are a network of early years settings with expertise and knowledge of the evidence base on what works to support child outcomes, and experience of delivering effective practice.

Hubs will support settings in adopting evidence-based practice improvements and will build local networks for sharing effective practice.

Early years stronger practice hubs will be distributed across England, with an ambition of 2 hubs in each region (18 hubs in total).

Who will benefit

Hubs will focus on supporting children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

They will support settings:

- without existing access to networks or relationships with other early years providers
- looking to improve the quality of their provision
- that could benefit from high-quality professional development for staff

Programme content

Hubs will support settings in adopting and implementing well-evidenced practice improvements by:

- establishing local networks of settings to share knowledge and effective practice
- proactively sharing information and advice on evidence-based approaches - for example, through newsletters, blogs and social media
- acting as a point of contact for bespoke advice and signposting to other funded support
- working with the [Education Endowment Foundation](#) to select evidence-based programmes to fund and make available to settings

Programme length

The programme will run for 2 academic years, ending in autumn 2024.

Programme availability

The first stronger practice hubs were established in November 2022.

Programme funding

It is free for settings to access support through the stronger practice hubs.

How to apply

For more information on the stronger practice hubs programme, see the [National Children's Bureau website](#).

Experts and mentors

Overview

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

- early years practitioners
- leaders
- whole settings

Who will benefit

The programme is aimed at settings who meet one or more of the criteria:

- been judged by Ofsted as requires improvement or inadequate in the past 3 years
- high numbers of children in receipt of early years pupil premium
- high numbers of children with special educational needs and disabilities
- high numbers of children taking up the disadvantaged-2-year-old offer

Programme content

The offer to early years settings includes:

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

A mentor will provide support to a nominated practitioner within each setting or to a small group of practitioners at one time. An expert will also support the setting leader.

Programme length

Settings will receive the support of an expert and mentor for one term between September 2022 and July 2024.

Mentors will provide up to 6 hours of mainly virtual support per setting.

Experts will provide up to 3 days of face-to-face support per setting.

Programme availability

The programme is available nationally.

Programme funding

Support from the experts and mentors is provided for free to settings.

How to apply

Early years settings can request the support of an expert and mentor using the [application form](#) on our delivery partner Pen Green's website.

Local authorities will also nominate settings on termly basis. Settings should consult with their local authority if they believe they're eligible for this programme.

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