

[Home](#) ▾ [Parenting, childcare and children's services](#) ▾ [Childcare and early years](#)
▾ [Early years continuing professional development and support](#)



[Department
for Education](#)

Guidance

Early years continuing professional development and support

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Applies to England

Contents

[Level 3 special educational needs coordinator \(SENCO\)](#)

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

[Maths Champions](#)

[Online early years child development training \(online EYCDT\)](#)

[Stronger practice hubs](#)

[More sources of online support](#)

The Department for Education (DfE) funds a range of training and support for early years educators and leaders. It is available both online and in person, depending on the programme. Online training offers flexibility, allowing staff to access it at convenient times. Stronger practice hubs provide additional support and networking opportunities both online and face to face.

Level 3 special educational needs coordinator (SENCO)

Early identification of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is crucial in ensuring children receive the support they need throughout their education. This training is aligned with the early years foundation stage framework. It provides current and aspiring early years SENCOs with the skills and knowledge required for the role and leads to an accredited level 3 qualification.

Which settings are eligible

This nationally available level 3 early years SENCO qualification is designed for SENCOs working in group-based or childminder settings, as well as those preparing to take on the role.

It is open to:

- level 3 educators in private, voluntary and independent settings
- Ofsted-registered childminders
- childminders registered with a childminding agency

Applicants must hold a full and relevant level 3 qualification or, in the case of childminders, a relevant level 2 qualification with at least one level 3 module completed and significant early years experience.

What it involves

The level 3 early years SENCO qualification takes 6 months to complete and includes online taught sessions and study units. The 3-hour sessions feature live, tutor-led training and include activities such as pre-reading, group discussions and breakout-room work. Participants can choose from weekday morning, afternoon or evening sessions, with a limited number of Saturday sessions for childminders. The online study units are accessed through the Canvas Virtual Learning Environment,

with login details and induction provided before the programme begins.

How to apply

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

Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI)

The [NELI programme](#) is for educators of reception-age pupils who need more support with their speech and language development and early literacy skills.

[Research by the Education Endowment Foundation](#) has shown that children who attend a setting that implements the programme make up to 4 months' additional progress. This increases to a potential 7 months for disadvantaged children.

Which settings are eligible

All state-funded schools with a reception class are invited to apply for places on the programme.

What it involves

While undertaking NELI's online training, the educator provides short, small-group and individual sessions to 3 to 6 children for 20 weeks, benefiting from mentor support throughout.

How long it takes

The intervention programme takes 20 weeks.

How to apply

[Sign up](#) on the NELI website.

Maths Champions

The [Maths Champions programme](#) is an online resource for educators who wish to increase their knowledge of and confidence in supporting early years maths provision.

[Research by the Education Endowment Foundation](#) has shown that children who attend a setting that implements the programme make up to 3 months' additional progress in not only their maths but also their language development. This increases to a potential 6 months for disadvantaged children.

Which settings are eligible

Settings with at least 6 children aged 3 and 4 are invited to apply for the programme if they work in:

- a school-based nursery
- an academy nursery
- a nursery school
- a PVI setting

What it involves

A setting appoints a 'maths champion' and a 'deputy maths champion', who receive one-to-one support from an early years adviser during their training. The training

covers key mathematical concepts and strategies to boost staff confidence. The champions assess their setting's current provision, and plan and implement steps to improve its practice.

How long it takes

The training programme takes 12 months. It consists of 9 steps that can be completed flexibly.

How to apply

[Sign up](#) on the Education Endowment Foundation website.

Online early years child development training (online EYCDT)

The [online EYCDT programme](#) programme is designed for educators who wish to strengthen their understanding of child development so they can best support children in early years settings and reception classes.

Which settings are eligible

The programme is suitable for educators working:

- in a school-based nursery
- in an academy nursery
- in a nursery school
- in a school with a reception class
- in a PVI setting

- as a childminder

What it involves

Educators work at their own pace, saving their progress and returning to the point at which they paused at any time. There are 8 modules:

- Module 1: Understanding child development and the early years foundation stage
- Module 2: Brain development and how children learn
- Module 3: Supporting children's 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: Mathematics
- Module 7: Effective curriculum and assessment
- Module 8: Supporting individual differences and needs

How long it takes

Each module takes between 90 minutes and 2 hours to complete.

Stronger practice hubs

[Stronger practice hubs](#) are networks of early years settings that share expertise and experience, and help settings adopt evidence-based improvements.

Hubs focus on improving outcomes for children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. There are 18 early years hubs across England – 2 in each region.

Which settings are eligible

Hubs support settings that:

- do not have access to a network or relationships with other early years providers
- want to improve the quality of their provision
- could benefit from high-quality professional development

What it involves

Hubs support settings by:

- establishing local networks to share knowledge and effective practice
- proactively providing information on evidence-based approaches
- acting as a point of contact for bespoke advice
- signposting to other funded support

More sources of online support

[Help for early years providers](#): resources, activities and support for childminders and educators working with children aged 0 to 5 years.

[Foundation years](#): news, policy and resources for early years professionals.

[Early years foundation stage \(EYFS\) statutory framework](#): the standards that schools and childcare providers must meet for the learning, development and care of children from birth to age 5.

[Development matters](#): non-statutory curriculum guidance for the early years foundation stage.

[Progress check at age 2](#): guidance for early years educators completing the EYFS progress check.

DfE is developing an early years training package to support educators in meeting the changes to safeguarding requirements that will be made to the statutory framework in September 2025. This will be a free resource for early years and reception-class educators. For more details on the changes, refer to the [EYFS safeguarding consultation response](#).

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