

Early Years Bulletin

Dear Colleagues,

Firstly, Happy New Year and welcome back following what we hope was a restful Christmas break.

There are a number of free training opportunities for early years and childcare settings, including a Playwork focused course for practitioners working in wraparound and out of school settings as well as training funded by the Virtual School via Knowledge, Action, Change (KCA) for settings working with vulnerable children.

In addition, the Early Years Update Meetings are taking place just before half-term; if you have not yet booked your place, please see the Training section for dates and booking information. They are a great opportunity to hear the latest policy news, as well as raise any questions you may have.

If you need any advice or support, please email the team on EYCC@worcestershire.gov.uk or submit a request via the [website](#).

Regards,

The Early Years Team

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Early Years Bulletin: Worcestershire News and Reminders

Nursery Education Funding

DAF Payments

If you have any children that are eligible for the Disability Access Funding (DAF) this term and would like to receive the annual payment as part of the February Estimate Payment, the required evidence must be submitted by Friday 24th January. A copy of the child's Parent Declaration Form and evidence of their receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) must be uploaded to the Children's Services Portal to generate the payment.

Spring Term Claims and Early Years Census Returns

The deadline for the Spring Term Claim and a completed Early Years Census return is Friday 17th January. If you have not yet completed either of these returns, they must be prioritised.

New guide launched on deferred and delayed entry to schools

Parents and carers in Worcestershire now have access to a comprehensive new guide to help them make informed decisions about deferred and delayed entry to schools. The [Deferred and Delayed Entry Guide 2025](#) provides clear and practical information about the processes, criteria, and support available for parents who may be exploring whether deferred or delayed school entry is the right choice for their child. It aims to clarify complex procedures and offer reassurance to families during this important decision-making process.

Children are not of compulsory school age until the term following their fifth birthday. Parents can defer the date their child is admitted to school until later in the same school year following their fourth birthday, providing they do not defer beyond the point at which they reach compulsory school age, or beyond the start of the final term of that school year.

Local Authority Devolution

Just prior to Christmas, the Government signalled the end of two-tier governance in the [English Devolution White Paper](#) and therefore our district and county councils will be abolished. It is essential to emphasise this is not optional, the Government could not be clearer that whether we like it or not this is happening, and we are to face the largest change that we have seen to local government in over 50 years. We will be required to move to a unitary structure in a relatively short timescale, alongside developing devolution proposals for a Strategic Authority to ensure our residents benefit from devolution. [Read the Council's response to the English Devolution White Paper in full.](#)

Worcestershire County Council Budget

The Council's budget for the current financial year (2024/25) continues to face relentless demand and cost pressures in three key areas of statutory service provision: Children's Social Care, Home to School Travel and Adult Social Care which have been reported in regular financial monitoring reports to Cabinet and through to Scrutiny. These pressures are being experienced by the majority of County Councils and upper tier authorities across the country.

Statement on budget from Leader of Worcestershire County Council

We, along with most other County Councils and upper tier authorities, continue to face relentless demand on services with more people than ever needing to use the services we provide. The areas driving most of this demand and cost are those we have to provide: Children's and Adult's Social Care, Home to School Travel and Special Education Needs & Disabilities (SEND) provision. In addition, the cost of providing these vital services also continues to increase.

These financial pressures are being made even worse by the rise in National Living Wage, the changes to Employers National Insurance Contributions which are being faced by all of our suppliers, partners and contractors and a very low level of support from Government via the local Government settlement.

At this draft budget stage, our total net budget requirement for 2025/26 is just over £495 million and after taking into account proposed savings, the slight increases in government grants and use of £15 million of reserves, this leaves a remaining budget gap of £33.6 million. Taking all of this into account, the proposed increase in Council Tax for Worcestershire is 4.99% which will mean an average increase of around £1.48 per week for average property. This means we will still have one of the lowest levels of council tax of any County Council.

As we have had such little support from Government in the settlement, we are in the position that we will need additional support in order for the Council to 'balance its books'. We have therefore submitted a request to Government for Exceptional Finance Support (EFS). This would give us permission to borrow to cover our gap in revenue expenditure. This borrowing will need to be repaid, along with interest, and is only a short-term measure whilst the council implements permanent solutions. This support does not solve the budget gap on an on-going basis so the Council will be developing sustainable solutions.

In the meantime, we will continue to support the most vulnerable people in our communities, provide good services for our residents and businesses, whilst delivering our plan for Worcestershire.

Councillor Simon Geraghty, Leader of Worcestershire County Council

Worcestershire Virtual School Early Years Training

Worcestershire Virtual School are extremely excited to be launching our 2025 **Early Years Training offer**.

This offer is **fully funded** and available to all Early year's practitioners, including nursery settings, childminders, and reception year teaching staff

We are continuing our partnership with KCA (Knowledge, Change, Action) **KCA** is an expert provider of training and consultancy to organisations working with vulnerable children and young people.

The training will enable practitioners to:

- *Discover your role in supporting healthy brain development*
- *Understand how you can support trauma recovery*
- *Use emotion coaching to promote resilience in your setting*

To see more information on the training available and register to secure your place, please download the [KCA flyer](#) or click on the following booking link. [KCA: Reg form: Worcestershire VS Early Years Spring Summer 2025](#)

For staff **new to the knowledge base** there are 2 online core models to attend:

- Core module: **Five to Thrive and the Importance of Connected Relationships** - 12 Feb 2025 (4pm to 6pm)
- Core module: **Understanding Toxic Stress and Trauma and Promoting Recovery during a time of Collective Adversity** - 12 Mar 2025 (4pm to 6pm)

For staff **who have attended the above training OR have recently received KCA delivered Attachment Trauma & Resilience training within the past 2 years** then there are 3 further online optional modules available as follows:

- Optional module: **Emotion Coaching and Promoting Resilience** - 9 Apr 2025 (4pm to 6pm)
- Optional module: **Transitions and Vulnerability** - 21 May 2025 (4pm to 6pm)
- Optional module: **Choose your words with Care: Narrative, Shame and Identity** - 25 Jun 2025 (4pm to 6pm)

*Note - anyone who signs up to the core modules but then is unable to attend on the day will then subsequently be sent the link to the FTT and UT mop-up sessions. Similarly, anyone who attempts to book on to the core offer once the sessions are full (max 40 people) will be added to a wait list and then also subsequently be sent the link to the FTT and UT mop-up sessions via our system.

We look forward to welcoming our early years settings to these wonderful training opportunities.

To take part in this fully funded professional development opportunity please register by following this link: <https://connected.kca.training/register.cfm?form=WorcsVSSprSum25>

Ofsted praise Worcestershire children's services

[Children's Social Care Services in Worcestershire have been praised for their positive progress following a recent inspection.](#) Ofsted inspectors visited Worcestershire County Council in December 2024 to look at the council's arrangements for children in care. The inspection report published on Monday (13 January 2025) highlighted that significant strides have been made since the full children's services inspection in May 2023 where an overall judgement of Good was achieved, showcasing the council's commitment to delivering high-quality care and support to children and families in the county. [Read the inspection report in full.](#)

Recruitment Reminder

Please don't forget that we can include any staff vacancies you are currently advertising via the WCF Facebook and LinkedIn pages. Please email ChSComms@worcestershire.gov.uk with the following information if you wish to make use of this service:

- Job title
- Location
- Hours
- Brief description of role
- Link to your setting for more information and/or details of how to apply
- Closing date

Early Years Bulletin: National News and Reminders

Childminder Start-Up Grants

If you are a childminder who registered with Ofsted or an Agency after 15th March 2023 and haven't yet applied for the Childminder Start-Up Grant, the scheme is coming to an end. To find out how to apply, please visit [Childminder Start-Up Grants Scheme](#).

Apply for the Early Years Sports Fund 2025

The Early Years Sports Fund is now open for applications in Worcester and the surrounding areas! This fantastic initiative is here to help early years settings, nurseries, pre-schools, and primary schools promote healthier, more active lifestyles for children aged 2-5.



Since its launch, the Early Years Sports Fund has supported over 1,100 free sports classes across the UK, inspiring children to be fitter, healthier, and happier. This £1 million programme is designed to tackle childhood obesity by introducing young children to the joys of movement and healthy habits, all in a safe and fun environment.

Why Join the Early Years Sports Fund?

- **Fully Funded Sessions:** Access free sports classes for your setting at no cost to participants.
- **Tackling Obesity:** With nearly 25% of children aged 4-5 in England classified as overweight or obese, this initiative is vital for promoting early intervention.
- **Proven Success:** The programme has been embraced by other regions, with councils playing a pivotal role in helping local nurseries and schools take advantage of these valuable resources.
- **Trusted by the Sector:** Featured by the Early Years Alliance and DayNurseries.co.uk, the fund has received national recognition for its positive impact.

How to Apply

Applications for 2025 are open now! To apply for free sports sessions, visit the [Early Years Sports Fund website](#) and complete the simple application form. Don't miss this opportunity to enhance your setting and support children in your care.

Together, we can ensure children in Worcester stay fit, active, healthy, and smiling!

Apply today at www.earlyyearssportsfund.co.uk.

Childcare Works HUB

The [Childcare Works HUB](#) has been refreshed and updated to provide a range of resources to support both early years and wraparound providers, including business tools and SEND resources. To access the HUB, please visit: [HUB Resources - childcareworks.org.uk](https://childcareworks.org.uk).

Ofsted Inspection Update

Ofsted has published the first monitoring report on 132 commitments made in the [Big Listen](#) and the response to [Dame Christine Gilbert's independent learning review](#).

They have also announced that they will begin trials of a new approach to education inspection during the beginning of January, with visits to a small number of volunteer schools. These visits will informally test elements of the proposed inspection framework, which Ofsted will publish for consultation in January. Later in the Spring Term and in parallel with the consultation, Ofsted will formally pilot the new approach in schools as well as other education settings, including early years providers.

For further information, please see [Ofsted publishes Big Listen action monitoring report and announces trials of new inspection approach - GOV.UK](#).

Early Years Bulletin: Out of School Provision

Learn Through Play (10GLH)

This 5 week course is based on the 8 principles of playwork, and would benefit current childcare staff in schools, private, voluntary and independent settings working with children within Early Years through to Key Stage 2. During this course you will have the opportunity to:

- Explore what is unique about playwork.
- Understand how to facilitate positive development through play.
- Ensure that high quality play opportunities are given to children.
- Establish the professional and ethical frameworks for playwork including risk assessments and safeguarding.
- Understand how to adapt play to ensure inclusivity.
- Become an advocate for children's self-directed play.

This course is free to attend.

The Learn Through Play course is comprised of weekly 2 hour sessions online via Microsoft Teams. We currently have places available on either:

- Course 1 - Wednesday 5th March – Wednesday 2nd April 1-3pm
- Course 2 - Wednesday 5th March – Wednesday 2nd April 7-9pm

If you are interested in attending one of these courses or would like some further information, please contact the Learning Services Team directly by Friday 7th February via email to: adultlearning@worcestershires.gov.uk with:

- Your full name
- Your education, private, voluntary or independent setting
- Your contact phone number
- The course you wish to book on

Wraparound Programme Funding

Are you considering opening or expanding before and after school provision? Funding is available to:

- Create new wraparound provision.
- Expand existing wraparound provision, creating additional places and/or increasing your childcare offer.
- Remove identified delivery barriers.

[Wraparound Funding Application Form](#)

Support is available from the Early Years and Childcare Team, please contact Sharon Jones by emailing Wraparound@worcestershires.gov.uk.

Early Years Bulletin: Early Help

Understanding your baby group for parents and carers

WANDS Family Hub in Droitwich are hosting an Understanding Your Baby group for new parents and carers to provide support and information. Please download the flyer from [Google Drive](#) to share with your families.

Pharmacy First Service

Action: Please share widely with your parents, families and staff via your websites, newsletters, social media and parent messaging services. Promotional materials are available to download.

Parents can now access healthcare advice from local pharmacies as a walk in service and in some cases via a video consultation. This avoids the delay of waiting for a GP appointment and could reduce absence from school. In person consultations are available in private rooms.

The service can be used for:

- Earache (from 12 months to 17 years old)
- Impetigo (from 12 months old)
- Infected insect bites (from 12 months old)
- Sore throats (from aged 5 years)
- Sinusitis (from aged 12 years)
- Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs) for women aged from 16 to 64 years
- Shingles (from aged 18 years)

The pharmacist can provide advice and, if necessary, NHS medicine (meeting normal prescription charges).

There is a suite of resources for you to promote this service to your families and staff available here: [NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Community Pharmacy – Pharmacy First Resources](#)

Letters to send to your parents/carers are available on [Google Drive](#).

Early Years Bulletin: Safeguarding

#Cut It Out: Raising Awareness of and Tackling Domestic Abuse

1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men will experience domestic abuse at some point in their life. #Cut It Out aims to help professionals to recognise the signs of domestic abuse, whilst raising awareness of available support. Please see the attached flyers for details of the free #Cut It Out training:

- [South Worcestershire](#)
- [North Worcestershire](#)

Safeguarding self-assessment audit tool for Out of School providers

We are pleased to announce that this newly developed tool is now available to download from the resources section on the Early Years Safeguarding pages of our website [Early years safeguarding | Worcestershire County Council](#), a copy of which can also be downloaded from [Google Drive](#).

This tool has been written specially **for before, out of school and holiday club providers**, to recognise and consider the additional safeguarding considerations required when working with school age children or that are specifically linked to practice issues most relevant or unique to out of school providers such as transporting children.

This self-assessment tool will support your Designated Safeguarding Lead/s (DSL) to:

- Audit current safeguarding and child protection arrangements, providing a robust and thorough review of safeguarding practice, policy, and procedure
- Identify areas for development and complete an action plan to address any areas for improvement that have been identified through the completion of the audit.

The audit tool is easy to use, just download and work your way through the different sections and when completed, if you are happy to share, please email a copy to eycc@worcestershire.gov.uk. Sharing the document with us helps us to evaluate how many settings across Worcestershire have completed an audit of their safeguarding practice, as well as enabling us to offer support if required.

Any questions or comments please contact the Early Years Team.

Early Years Bulletin: News from the Inclusion Team

Early Years Inclusion Team Offer

The Area SENCo Team are offering surgery support sessions every half term. These are dedicated afternoon surgeries for Early Years SENCOs giving the opportunity for a 30-minute meeting (currently delivered via the telephone). The purpose of the meeting is to discuss more complex Inclusion issues with an Area SENCo.

Dates and time slots:

- 11/02/25 1-30 to 2.00, 2.15 to 2.45 and 3.00 to 3.30
- 08/04/25 9.30 – 10.00, 10.15 to 10.45 and 11.00 to 11.30
- 24/06/25 1.30 to 2.00, 2.15 to 2.45 and 3.00 to 3.30

Booking is essential as places are limited. To book your place you will need to add your name and number onto this document: [Inclusion Surgery List 24.01.24 - Google Docs](#)

Early Years Inclusion Funding

Early Years Inclusion Funding can be spent in a variety of different ways to support the children in your setting. Have you considered using some of the funding in some specific Early Years Inclusion Training. There are many training courses with some new additions this term, such as the Emotional Literacy in Early Years modules:

- Supporting a child through loss and grief is extremely hard and sometimes as adults we don't have the strategies needed to support a child to help their healing. Why not look at 'Supporting Early Years children with loss and bereavement'.
- Supporting a child who is trying to navigate a range of new emotions and feelings then why not look at 'Understanding emotional literacy and developing active listening skills' or 'Developing strategies to support early years children with managing emotions'.
- Supporting a new child to your setting to be able to build social skills to make friends, never an easy task so why not look at 'Supporting Early years children with social and friendship skills'.

The full range of Emotional Literacy in Early Years modules can be found within the [Early Years Training Directory \(page 23\)](#) or by visiting the [CPD](#) and search the topic you wish to pursue, such as bereavement, behaviour , emotional literacy, etc.

Early Years Inclusion Funding dates

Worcestershire County Council Deadlines for Spring Term 2025 Inclusion Funding applications: For any providers that have children who have started during the Spring Term 2025, who require additional funding, please apply by 23rd January 2025: [Early Years Inclusion Funding application process](#)

Monitoring Form Return Deadlines: Please remember that ALL GR4 + Challenge, Exceptional and 0-5 NON-NEF Inclusion Supplement Funding require a monitoring form to be completed. The Spring Term 2025 forms are available between the 1st – 15th February 2025. Failure to submit a monitoring form may result in no Inclusion Supplement being paid.

Reminder: To apply for Challenge and Exceptional funding, the child must be known to the [Early Years Inclusion Process](#).

“Support Whilst You Wait”

Support is available to children and young people, as well as their families, who find themselves experiencing long waits for appointments with Health services in Worcestershire, via the Support Whilst You Wait webpages.

The online information is designed to help children and young people, parents, carers and families by providing details of support and resources that are available locally and nationally. Please share the [attached poster](#) and [QR code](#) with your families.

SENDIASS

Do you support children with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) in your setting? Do you want to gain a better understanding of the sections of an EHCP and what should be included? If so, why not join the FREE SENDIASS training workshop for professionals 'What does a good EHCP look like?' on Tuesday 4 March 2025, 1.30-3.30pm at the SENDIASS Training Room in Worcester.

[What Does a Good Education Health and Care Plan \(EHCP\) look like? Workshop for Professionals- HW SENDIASS](#)

The SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS) also offer other **FREE SEND Training Workshops and Webinars** for parent carers and professionals?

Workshops currently available for **Parent Carers**:

- [Autism and Me \(developed by autistic young people\)- HW SENDIASS](#)
- [What does a good Education Health & Care Plan \(EHCP\) look like? – HW SENDIASS](#)
- [How to check a draft Education Health and Care Plan \(EHCP\)-HW SENDIASS ONLINE WORKSHOP](#)
- [What you need to know if your child has an additional need/ disability- HW SENDIASS ONLINE WORKSHOP](#)
- [Who are SENDIASS and how can they support me? - HW SENDIASS Online Information Session](#)

Workshops currently available for **Professionals**:

- [Autism & Me \(Developed by Autistic Young People\) Workshop for Professionals- HW SENDIASS](#)
- [Herefordshire and Worcestershire SENDIASS Online Information Session for Professionals](#)
- [Special Educational Needs \(SEN\) Support and The Graduated Response in Schools Workshop for Professionals- HW SENDIASS](#)
- [What Does a Good Education Health and Care Plan \(EHCP\) look like? Workshop for Professionals- HW SENDIASS](#)

All sessions are interactive, enabling participants to ask questions. More dates are added each term. **If you have any questions about the workshops or would like to host a session at your setting, please contact SENDIASSTraining@worcestershire.gov.uk for more information.**

Find out more on the [SENDIASS Training Webpage](#)

SENDIASS would appreciate your help in informing the families that you support about these opportunities. [Download flyers for use in your parent/carers communications.](#)

Early Years Bulletin: Training

If you encounter any issues when booking courses via CPD, please contact the Training Team directly via 01905 844420 or workforcesupport@worcestershire.gov.uk.

Early Years Update Meetings: Spring 2024

An opportunity to hear the latest Early Years news on policy, Ofsted and best practice.

Childminders - the childminder sessions also include the SENCo Cluster meeting

- 13 February 2025, 7pm to 8.30pm, virtual delivery, course code: EY 10273 / 85140

Out of School Providers (Save the date – will shortly be available on CPD)

- 11 February 2025, 7pm to 8:30pm, virtual delivery

Group Settings (All group-based provision including school nurseries)

- 12 February 2025, 6.30pm to 8pm, virtual delivery, course code: EY 10272 / 85143
- 14 February 2025, 10am to 11.30am virtual delivery, course code: EY 10272 / 85144

Cost: Free

To book: via [CPD](#) using your setting CPD leader login details and course code.

Confirmations will go to the delegate email provided and include the relevant MS teams joining information.

Understanding the EYFS Framework for Childminders and Childminding Assistants

A series of webcasts that are designed to give childminders an understanding of the requirements they must meet as a registered childcare provider for children aged birth to five. By fulfilling these requirements, childminders are able to create a high quality, welcoming and safe setting where children can enjoy learning and grow in confidence.

- Episode 1: Rationale and underpinning themes (Course code 10527)
- Episode 2: Educational Programmes (Course code 10530)
- Episode 3: Building your curriculum (Course code 10531)
- Episode 4: The wonder of teaching (Course code 10532)
- Episode 5: Observation, assessment, and planning (Course code 10533)
- Episode 6: Safeguarding and Welfare requirements (Course code 10534)
- Episode 7: Leading effective childminding practice (Course code 10535)

Cost: Free

To book: via [CPD](#) using your setting CPD leader login details and course code.

Confirmations will go to the delegate email provided and include the relevant MS teams joining information.

Early Years Inclusion Training

The Early Years Inclusion Team are offering all of their training during 2024/25 for free. The following courses are all available to book:

- Annual Reviews of EHCP's - course code 10496
- Autism in the Early Years – course code 10003
- How to complete an Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA) – course code 10495
- Individual Provision Maps (IPMs) and Smart Outcomes – course code 10494
- SENCo Forum/clusters – course code 10160
- SEND in the Early Years – course code 10493
- Training for New SENCo's – course code 10156
- Transition in the Early Years – course code 10168
- Webcast: How to write an Individual Support Plan – course code 10084
- What is the SCERTS approach for EYFS – course code 10385

Further details of each course can be found in the [Early Years training directory](#) or alternatively via [CPD – Courses Search](#) using the course code.

To book: via [CPD](#) using your setting CPD leader login details and course code.

Confirmations will go to the delegate email provided and include the relevant MS teams joining information.