

£180 million to improve children's development in the early years

Every region in England will benefit from programmes to improve teaching of children's early speech, language and numeracy, along with professional development to build strong leadership skills and improve the understanding of children's development. New opportunities will also be provided for graduates looking to embark on a career in early years teaching, as well as staff looking to train as early years special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs).

Evidence shows that access to early education is crucial in supporting children to thrive in adulthood and contribute to society. The [Education Endowment Fund](#) has also shown that improving young children's pre-school language skills could boost the economy by up to £1.2 billion over the course of their lifetimes.

Up to £180 million of government funding over the three years will support the sector to focus on children's development in their earliest of years and help to address existing recruitment and retention challenges. It follows commitments by the Government to improve parents' access to affordable, flexible childcare through ambitious reforms, for which work continues.

Minister for Schools and Childhood, Kelly Tolhurst, said:

The early years of a child's life are vital, not only in establishing important developmental skills, but also in building a lifelong love of learning that will help them succeed in adult life.

I'm really proud of the quality and dedication of our early years workforce. This package of support is a huge investment in their skills and professional development, because raising the status of this important sector is key to its growth.

The Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI) programme, which has already helped to boost the speech and language skills of an estimated 90,000 children, will also continue this academic year.

The Department for Education, in partnership with the Department of Health and Social Care, has also launched a new '[Better Health – Start for Life](#)' campaign, providing parents of children aged 0 to 4 with practical advice and tips to help them develop their child's language and literacy skills before starting school. Funding from today's announcement will also support parents to gain additional advice through new Family Hubs, expected to open in the first half of 2023.

Today's package of support, which will benefit pre-school children all over

England, includes:

- **Early maths, language, and social development training for 10,000 professionals through the third phase of the Professional Development Programme (PDP3)** – more than 1,300 professionals in 51 local authorities were provided with bespoke training designed to support the learning and development of children affected by the pandemic during the second phase of this programme, meaning around 20,000 children will have benefited from better trained, more confident staff;
- **The national rollout of the Expert and Mentors programme to provide bespoke leadership support to 7,500 early years settings and childminders** to address the impact of the pandemic on children in their care. This support is free and available across the country to eligible settings. Around 200 settings across the North of England, Lancashire and Yorkshire received support through a pilot of this programme this Spring;
- **Graduate-level specialist training** leading to early years teacher status – evidence is very clear that higher qualifications are consistently identified as a predictor of higher quality and associated with better child outcomes;
- **Support for nearly 6,000 early years professionals to achieve the National Professional Qualification in Early Years Leadership (NPQEYL)** which is designed to support early years leaders to develop expertise in leading high-quality education and care, effective staff and organisational management, and support the recovery of children's development that has been impacted through the pandemic;
- **Training for up to 5,000 Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs)** to help identify children's needs earlier so they have the right support. A commitment reaffirmed in the SEND Green Paper;
- **A new network of 18 Stronger Practice Hubs** to support early years practitioners to adopt evidence-based practice improvements, build local networks for sharing effective practice and cultivate system leadership;
- **A new universal online child development training offer** to help staff improve their knowledge and understanding of how pre-school children develop, as well as training for early years professionals to help parents and guardians encourage their children's development at home;
- **The continuation of the Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI) programme** during the academic year 2022-23 – building on the two-thirds

of primary schools which have already benefitted from this investment, improving the speech and language skills of an estimated 90,000 children in reception classes.

This investment builds on continued work to put children's education and skills back on track after the pandemic. The government has set a target of 90% of primary children reaching the expected standard in literacy and numeracy, with wider investment confirmed to help every young person leaves school with a strong grasp of these skills.

The government continues to consider responses to its consultation on regulatory changes in childcare and will respond in due course.