

# Targeted training for staff to teach early language and numeracy skills

Thousands of pre-school children will benefit from improved language, numeracy and personal, social and emotional skills, thanks to a programme of high-quality training and professional development support for early years staff.

The Early Years Professional Development Programme (PDP) is to be extended to around 50 new local authorities across England in 2021/22, the Department for Education has announced today (6 September).

The £10 million extension, building on £20 million already invested in the programme since 2019 as part of the Government's efforts to narrow the attainment gap in the early years, is aimed at levelling up outcomes for children, particularly the most disadvantaged, between the ages of two and four by providing high-quality training and professional development support for staff in nurseries and preschools, or childminders.

Up to 2,000 early years practitioners and teachers in the new areas will benefit from high-quality online training delivered directly by experienced trainers, reaching up to 32,000 pre-school children across the country. The local authorities who will benefit from the additional training support will be confirmed later in the autumn.

Children and Families Minister Vicky Ford said:

We know high-quality early years education can make an enormous difference to the outcomes of our youngest children, not just in their language and numeracy but also their social and emotional development, helping to give them the best possible start to life. This is more important than ever as we build back from the pandemic.

This programme will play a central role in equipping our important early years staff with the high-quality training they deserve, so that they can support children at the very beginning of their education, enabling them to build on these skills with confidence as they grow up.

The second phase of the Early Years Professional Development Programme is for one-year, delivered by Education Development Trust in partnership with Elklan providing high quality, evidence-based and fully-funded professional development for early years practitioners from schools and private, voluntary and independent early years settings.

As part of this, the Department will also be providing online professional development training, developed by the Anna Freud Centre, targeted at

Personal, Social and Emotional Development for two to four-year-olds in direct response to the Covid-19 pandemic to ensure that children's mental health and wellbeing is prioritised. The training also includes a focus on staff wellbeing and will be rolled out as part of the second phase of PDP from January 2022.

Also announced earlier this year as part of the Government's education recovery support package, the Department confirmed an additional £153m investment over three academic years from 2021/22 for training for early years staff to support the learning and development of children. This will provide the opportunity for evidence-based professional development for early years practitioners, including through new programmes focusing on key areas such as speech and language development as well as support for early years staff and leaders to implement our Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework reforms. Further details on this recovery investment will be provided shortly.

In addition to the support for the very youngest children, the Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI) programme has also helped an estimated 60,000 four and five-year-olds to date and will improve outcomes in Reception age children's early language, communication and speech. Now in its second wave, every state school can benefit from training and resources to support thousands more pupils to become confident with these vital skills.

The revised Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework also became statutory from September this year and sets the standards to ensure children learn and develop well, helping to improve their outcomes at age 5, particularly in early language and literacy. It aims to strengthen early years curriculum, as well as assessment and practice to improve outcomes and close the gap for disadvantaged children.