



Early Years Experts and Mentors Programme – Information for Settings

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Background

The Early Years Experts and Mentors Covid-19 Recovery Programme from the Department for Education is focused on supporting Early Years practitioners and leaders, to address the impact of the pandemic on the youngest children.

The programme is being piloted in the Lancashire and West Yorkshire and the North of England Regional School Commissioner regions from April – July 2022, and will be rolled out nationally, across England, from **September 2022**.

Eligible early years practitioners, leaders and whole settings will be offered bespoke support to be delivered both in the setting, face-to-face, and virtually. The offer to settings will include leadership support, coaching for leaders, mentoring for practitioners and whole-setting support, depending on needs.

Settings selected for the Experts and Mentor programme will receive the support of an Expert and Mentor (or in some cases an Area Lead) for **one term**, between September 2022 and July 2024.

All settings that take part in the programme will also be able to access a **new online child development training offer** to upskill practitioners and improve knowledge of child development, so they will be better able to support children in their care, particularly those whose development may have been impacted by the covid pandemic.

Who is eligible for this programme?

The majority of settings who will receive support through this programme will be Private, Voluntary or Independent (PVI) nursery settings. In some cases, we will also support maintained nursery schools and school-based nurseries if appropriate. This programme will not support reception year. For example, a school with reception year only, would not be eligible to receive support through this programme.

Currently, eligible settings include those who have:

- been judged as Requires Improvement (RI) or inadequate in the last 3 years
- high numbers of children in receipt of EY Pupil Premium
- high numbers of children with SEND needs
- high numbers of children taking up the disadvantaged 2-year-old offer

There is some flexibility to receive support if your setting does not fit this criteria.

Please note, childminders are also not eligible to receive support through the programme at this time. We are working on designing a strand of the programme for childminders, specifically. More information on this will be announced in due course.

What support will the setting receive, and who will deliver this support to settings?

There are 3 different roles within the programme who will provide support to settings: **Mentor, Expert & Area Lead**. All roles will focus on helping children recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, including narrowing the gap between disadvantaged children and others.

For all roles, applicants who will be supporting your setting will have at least 3 years' experience and are currently working in an early years setting that is Ofsted rated

'good' or 'outstanding' (or equivalent independent school inspection rating). This includes those working in schools, nursery schools, private, voluntary or PVI nurseries, or other early years settings.

Area Leads/Experts/Mentors may also be staff who are currently working in early years roles within Local Authorities (LAs), or universities.

All applicants will have attended training which has been organised by DfE and our training partner, Hemsalls, before they can begin supporting settings.

Mentor role

Settings will be allocated an Early Years Mentor who will provide support to a nominated practitioner, or small group of practitioners at one time, to provide advice and guidance, as well as supporting them to identify strengths and areas for development in their own practice. Mentors will also be able help practitioners complete the new online training offer.

Examples of activities to be conducted by Mentor:

- Supporting practitioners to identify strengths and weaknesses within their practice and providing guidance to enable improvements in their practice
- Supporting practitioners through our new online child development training
- Supporting practitioners to identify children most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, including those with significant time out of the setting and advising how they can be best supported

The Mentor role will be **remote/virtual**, so they will not attend the setting in person. Mentors will be required to provide 6 hours of support, per early years setting, over one term.

The hours can be organised to suit the mentor and mentee(s), for example by having fortnightly hourly calls or weekly 30 minutes video-calls.

Expert role

Settings will also be allocated an Early Years Expert, who will provide 3 days of **face-to-face support in the setting**, over one term.

The Expert will work with the setting **leader**, and with agreement from both parties, will decide the type of activities the Expert undertakes in the setting. The focus must be around supporting children to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, including narrowing the gap between disadvantaged children and others.

Examples of activities to be conducted by Expert:

- Supporting leaders to identify strengths and weaknesses within the setting and providing guidance in action planning to overcome any areas for development
- Supporting leaders to identify children most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic including those with significant time out of the setting and advising how they can be best supported
- Supporting leaders with implementation of the revised EYFS framework, including reducing unnecessary tracking and paperwork.

Area Lead role

Each LA has also been allocated an Area Lead. Their role is to support the Experts and Mentors in their area and provide quality assurance. The Area Lead will contact you at the start of the programme to introduce themselves, so you are aware of who to contact if you have any concerns. They will also contact you again during the programme to check how it is going.

Area leads will also perform the Expert role for one setting in the LA, as described above. This means they will provide 3 days of **face-to-face support in the setting**, to the setting leader, over one term.

If you are allocated the Area Lead as your expert, then the delivery partner and/or DfE will contact you to ensure you are happy with the support provided.

How to get involved to receive support

We (DfE) have reached out to all LAs across England to raise awareness of the Experts and Mentor programme. We have asked LAs to nominate settings in their areas, who they think should receive support through the programme. Initially, we are just asking settings to express their interest in receiving support during the **Autumn term 2022**.

In making these suggestions, we have asked LAs to liaise with you (settings), to gauge your interest in being involved, and to see where they need the support most. Please do engage with your LA if you are interested in receiving the support of the Experts and Mentor programme.

There is also an option for you (settings) to **self-refer**, so you will be able to request the support of an early years Expert and Mentor yourselves. Where you decide to self-refer, we would suggest that you still discuss this with your relevant LA.

Please see the link to self-refer here: <https://www.pengreen.org/early-years-experts-and-mentors/>

If you (a setting) do not fit the above eligibility criteria and wish to self-refer, we advise discussing this with your LA before doing so.

Settings who are receiving the support of Experts/Mentors, will not receive any funding from this programme.

Next steps

If you are interested in receiving support through the Experts and Mentor programme, we ask that they get in touch with your LA to explain why you wish to be involved, and how you meet the eligibility criteria outlined above. You may also wish to self-refer using the link above.

Please take the time to watch the 10-minute **recorded webinar** provided by DfE, where you can learn more about the programme.

Please see link to the webinar here:

[DfE early years COVID-19 recovery - experts and mentors programme - YouTube](#)