



Ian Morris

Early Years and Childcare Strategic Manager

Email: imorris@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk

Tel: 01905 844721

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Early Years Bulletin

Dear Colleagues,

I hope that you are settling into the new term and all is going well. September is always an exciting month; a time for looking ahead, refining what we do well, trying new ways of working and of course, greeting new children and families. This year brings more new challenges than most, with the pandemic very much still looming large but also with the introduction of the new EYFS and Development Matters.

Our bulletin this week provides a further opportunity to engage with our Early Years Safeguarding audit. This is a project co-produced by the Early Years and Education Safeguarding teams which we think you will find of great benefit in enabling you to reflect on your safeguarding practices.

We also include an article on the importance of the progress check at 2 which links to further guidance on our webpages.

Finally, don't forget our Early Years conference. We are delighted that you are taking advantage of our Early Bird offer. Having visited the venue last week as part of our final preparations the Early Years team are excited at the prospect of a memorable two days so please make sure you come along and join us.

Enjoy your week.

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Annual Safeguarding Self-Assessment for Early Years Settings and Childminders

Over the term we have consulted with the sector and worked with some DSL's from across the County and have now developed a self-assessment audit tool (Annual Safeguarding Self-Assessment for Early Years Settings and Childminders). Schools for some years have been completing a similar assessment known as the section 175 which legally has to be completed by all schools.

In Early Years the toolkit is **not** mandatory, however WCF believe this will support you in your setting to assess the effectiveness of safeguarding over the past 12 months. This is an online survey which will be available yearly and can be completed via an [online survey](#) by **31st October 2021**. The results will be shared with Denise Hannibal, Early Years and Education Safeguarding Lead and will support developing training needs for Worcestershire Early Years DSL's and all Practitioners, as well as supporting you in your setting to identify any priorities to ensure safeguarding is effective.

Return to Settings Leaflet for Parents

Please find attached a **return to settings leaflet for parents**. Public Health England has published a series of resources to help keep parents informed as their children return to education settings. The [leaflet](#), entitled "*Taking your child to an early years setting: information for parents*", outlines the importance of children attending early years settings and includes a wide-ranging FAQ .

Healthy Start

Healthy Start is a Government Scheme that provides weekly vouchers to eligible parents and can help parent/carers who are pregnant or have a young child under four. These vouchers can be spent on milk, fruit and vegetables and infant formula milk at local shops and supermarkets, as well as offering coupons for free vitamins too.

Early Years settings should be promoting this scheme to parent/carers in their settings.

For more information about the scheme, visit [Healthy Start website \(opens in a new window\)](#).

Qualifying criteria for the Healthy Start programme

Parent/carers will qualify for the Healthy Start scheme if they are at least 10 weeks pregnant or if they have at least one child that's under 4. In addition, they must be receiving any of the following:

- Child Tax Credit (only if the family's annual income is £16,190 or less)
- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Pension Credit (which includes the child addition)
- Universal Credit (only if the family's take-home pay is £408 or less per month from employment)

Additional criteria for Healthy Start:

- If the parent/carer is under 18 and pregnant, even if they are not claiming any benefits
- If the parent/carer claims income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and are over 10 weeks pregnant
- If they or their partner get Working Tax Credit run-on only. (Working Tax Credit run-on is the Working Tax Credit they receive in the 4 weeks immediately after they have stopped working for 16 hours or more per week)

To find out if they earn £408 or less per month from employment whilst claiming Universal Credit, please advise them to look at their 'take-home pay for this period' on their monthly Universal Credit award notice.

Advice on how to apply:

Please see the [How to apply page on the Healthy Start website \(opens in a new window\)](#).

Where can parent/carers get Healthy Start vitamins from?

To find where parent/carers can use their Healthy Start vitamins vouchers choose the relevant district below:

- [Bromsgrove](#)
- [Malvern Hills](#)
- [Redditch](#)
- [Worcester City](#)
- [Wychavon](#)
- [Wyre Forest](#)

Save the Date: Early Years Conference on 15th & 16th October

We are pleased to announce the return of our popular Early Years conference.

Titled “New Beginnings”, it will take place on Friday 15th and Saturday 16th October at Worcester Racecourse. The Early Years team are inviting you to a full day of inspirational and motivational keynotes and workshops exploring the most talked about and current topics in Early Years.

Our exciting line-up of keynote speakers include the internationally renowned John Siraj Blatchford and Lynnette Brock from SchemaPlay, the former story-telling laureate Katrice Horsley, and acclaimed independent consultants Neil Farmer and Sonia Mainstone-Cotton.

There will also be the usual wide array of stalls and exhibitors. There really will be something for everyone in the Worcestershire Early Years community so please take advantage of our special Early Bird booking offer of just £50 to reserve your place.

Booking is now live via [CPD online](#) and please be advised that places are limited.

The codes are:

- Friday 15th October - CON/21/433
- Saturday 16th October - CON/21/434

Resource for Aiding Interaction and Developing Shared Attention

The Inclusion Team has produced an information leaflet listing a selection of resources, toys and ideas that may be useful to support children with interaction, shared attention, turn taking and early communication. The resources should be utilised by parent/carers and practitioners for developing shared attention with an adult in the first instance. When children are confident in this skill, adults should then introduce another child to the activities to develop interactions and shared attention with the child’s friendship and peer group.

The resources are particularly useful for children with complex communication needs and/or autism. Please email the Inclusion Team on eyinclusion@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk to request the ‘Aiding Interaction and Developing Shared Attention’ information leaflet or call the Inclusion Helpline on 01905 843099.

Inclusion Courses – Buy one get one half price

A special offer is available for early years inclusion courses. Quote the code **SENCOAutumn** on CPD online to get 50% off the second course you book onto.

For a full list of inclusion courses available please visit the [WCF Early Years Training webpage](#) and book on via [CPD online](#).

Progress check at age two – EYFS 2021

When a child is aged between two and three, practitioners must review their progress, and provide parents and/or carers with a short written summary of their child's development in the prime areas. This progress check must identify the child's strengths, and any areas where the child's progress is less than expected. If there are significant emerging concerns, or an identified special educational need or disability, practitioners should develop a targeted plan to support the child's future learning and development involving parents and/or carers and other professionals (for example, the provider's Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) or health professionals) as appropriate.

Beyond the prime areas, it is for practitioners to decide what the written summary should include, reflecting the development level and needs of the individual child. The summary must highlight: areas in which a child is progressing well; areas in which some additional support might be needed; and focus particularly on any areas where there is a concern that a child may have a developmental delay (which may indicate a special educational need or disability). It must describe the activities and strategies the provider intends to adopt to address any issues or expected that the progress check would usually be undertaken by the setting where the child has spent most time. Practitioners must discuss with parents and/or carers how the summary of development can be used to support learning at home.

Practitioners should encourage parents and/or carers to share information from the progress check with other relevant professionals, including their health visitor and the staff of any new provision the child may transfer to. Practitioners must agree with parents and/or carers when will be the most useful point to provide a summary. Where possible, the progress check and the Healthy Child Programme health and development review at age two (when health visitors gather information on a child's health and development) should inform each other and support integrated working. This will allow health and education professionals to identify strengths as well as any developmental delay and any particular support from which they think the child/family might benefit. Providers must have the consent of parents and/or carers to share information directly with other relevant professionals.

The Worcestershire Early Years team have been working alongside Health Visitors and some Worcestershire Providers to develop a more integrated approach to sharing information from the check. All Early Years providers can now use the portal for sharing information where concerns for 2 year olds and their development have been raised. Below are the links to the process, which is currently in the pilot stage, but would welcome all providers to follow this process if referrals are needed.

[Integrated 2 Year Check - Worcestershire Children First Education Services](#)

Early Years Attendance Data

The DfE have made the decision to continue collecting Early Years Attendance data during the Autumn Term, to enable them to monitor the ongoing impact of Covid-19 on the early years sector. To minimise the burden on providers, the collection will now be on a monthly basis as per the dates below:

- Week commencing Monday 6th September
- Week commencing Monday 4th October
- Week commencing Monday 1st November
- December date to be confirmed

The information provided across all local authorities is used to inform the Governments Covid-19 recovery planning; it is therefore really important that we enable them to have an accurate picture of the early years sector within Worcestershire by submitting a response from all providers.

The data collection form for the week commencing Monday 6th September is now live and can be found here: <https://forms.office.com/r/WTsvAidkes>

The form should be completed by **all settings**, including schools, who have Early Years children in attendance. Children accessing Reception provision should not be included.

Please click on the link above, complete the form and submit by **9am on Tuesday 14th September**.

Best regards,



Ian Morris
Early Years and Childcare Strategy Manager

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