



# Early Years Experts and Mentors Programme – Information for Settings

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## Background

The Early Years Experts and Mentors 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 available nationally, across England.

Settings selected for the Experts and Mentor programme will receive the support of an Expert and Mentor for **one term**, between September 2022 and July 2024.

The programme will provide a mixture of face-to-face and virtual support. The offer to settings will include leadership support, coaching for leaders, and mentoring for practitioners.

All settings that take part in the programme will also be able to access **new Early Years online child development training** to upskill practitioners and improve knowledge of child development. This will be available during the Autumn.

The new online child development training will build on the existing [Early Years Foundation Stage \(EYFS\) online service](#).

## Who is eligible for this programme?

The Experts and Mentors programme supports **Private Voluntary or Independent (PVI) nursery settings, maintained nursery schools and school-based nurseries**.

To be eligible for the programme, settings must fit at least one of the following criteria:

- been judged as Requires Improvement (RI) or inadequate by Ofsted 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

Please note:

This programme will not support reception year. For example, a school with reception year only, is not eligible to receive support through this programme.

## What are the benefits of joining this programme?

By joining the programme, settings will receive the support of fellow early years professionals, who are passionate about supporting others to improve practice and outcomes for children.

This support is **free** and available across the country, for eligible settings.

Settings will also gain the opportunity to develop working relationships and network with others who have the common aim of improving standards for children following the Covid-19 pandemic. This includes DfE, local authorities, our delivery partner for the programme Pen Green Research Centre, and early years professionals from other settings.

Some of the main aims of the programme include:

- Supporting settings to identify strengths and areas for development within the setting and providing guidance in action planning
- Supporting settings and their leadership to build confidence following uncertainties of the pandemic
- Supporting settings with implementation of the EYFS framework 2021
- Supporting leaders to plan, deliver and refine an effective curriculum
- Supporting staff with Continuing Professional Development (CPD)
- Providing advice for supporting children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) or English as an Additional Language (EAL)
- Supporting settings to build strong relationships with parents and carers

## How much time is required for this programme?

As outlined above, settings selected for the Experts and Mentor programme will receive the support of an Expert and Mentor for **one term**, between September 2022 and July 2024.

Over this term, setting leaders will be provided up to 3 days of support from their Expert. In addition, practitioners will receive up to 6 hours of support from their Mentor.

This time can be broken down into hours, as necessary, to suit the Expert, Mentor and staff at the setting receiving support.

## Who will deliver the 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.

Area Leads, Experts and Mentors all have at least 3 years' experience in early years and are currently working in an early years setting that is Ofsted rated 'good' or 'outstanding' (or equivalent). They may work in schools, nursery schools, PVI nurseries, or other early years settings.

They may also be staff who are currently working in early years roles within Local Authorities (LAs), or universities.

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

## Mentor role

Settings will be allocated a Mentor who will provide support to a nominated practitioner, or small group of practitioners at one time.

The Mentor role will be predominately **remote/virtual**. Mentors are permitted to visit a setting they are supporting, however, this is not compulsory.

Mentors will provide a total of **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 Expert, who will provide **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.

Experts will provide a total of **3 days** of support, per early years setting, over one term. The days can be broken down into hours, to suit the Expert and setting leader.

## Area Lead role

Area Leads will perform the Expert role outlined above. This means they will provide **3 days of face-to-face support** in a setting, to the setting **leader**, over one term.

In addition, as part of their role, Area Leads will be responsible for supporting the Experts and Mentors in their local authority area and providing quality assurance for the programme.

The Area Lead will contact your setting at the start of the programme to introduce themselves. If you have any concerns about the Experts or Mentors allocated to your setting, you should contact your Area Lead in the first instance.

## How to get involved to receive support

Please submit the '**Request for Support**' document available on Pen Green's website [here](#).

The DfE have reached out to local authorities (LAs) across England to raise awareness of the Experts and Mentors programme. LAs can nominate settings in their area, who they think should receive support through the programme.

Please do engage with your LA if you are interested in receiving support from the Experts and Mentors programme.

Please take the time to watch this 10-minute [recorded webinar](#) provided by DfE, where you can learn more about the programme.

Please note, settings who are receiving the support from this programme, will not receive any funding to take part.