

EARLY NEWS

Christmas
Issue 32



Welcome to the Christmas edition of our Early Years Newsletter! As we approach the end of the year, it's a time to celebrate the incredible work happening across Sefton's early years community. From festive activities at our Family Hubs to exciting CPD opportunities and new resources for professionals, this edition is packed with updates to support you and the families you work with.

Inside, you'll find guidance on potty training, sleep support, and child development training, plus details of national initiatives like Big Schools' Birdwatch and the Maths Champions programme. We also shine a spotlight on outstanding practice in our settings and share ways to connect families with local support.

Thank you for everything you've done this year to give children the best start in life. We hope these resources help you finish the term feeling inspired and ready for the year ahead.



Latest News, Training & Guidance

Improve Your Understanding of Sleep with the Sleep Well Academy Foundation Programme

Understanding sleep is essential for supporting children and families and the Sleep Well Academy's Foundation Programme makes learning simple and accessible. This online course is designed for parents, carers and professionals who want to explore why sleep matters, how it works, what causes sleep difficulties, and practical strategies to improve sleep.

The programme offers around an hour of flexible learning, plus optional exercises, a downloadable workbook, and the chance to join a live Q&A drop-in session. It's a great introduction for professionals and counts towards 1.5 CPD hours.

There are 200 free spaces available through Sefton Council, and you can complete the course at your own pace any time before 31 March 2026.

To register your interest, please email Lyndsey.Rimmer@sefton.gov.uk.

Click [here](#) or scan the QR code to visit the Sleep Well Academy website.



Latest News, Training & Guidance

Your Go-To Hub for Early Years Policy and Practice

If you're looking for the latest news, policy updates and guidance to support your work with children aged 0–5, the Foundation Years website is an essential resource for early years professionals.

The site brings together key information from government and sector experts, helping practitioners stay informed on best practice, statutory requirements and emerging developments. You'll find clear sections covering everything from curriculum and assessment to safeguarding and SEND, alongside links to training opportunities and practical tools to support your continuous professional development.

Click [here](#) or scan the QR code to read the full details.



Practical Help for Practitioners: Discover the EY Alliance Resources

Discover expert advice and practical guidance to support your early years practice with the Early Years Alliance Advice and Information page.

This dedicated hub brings together a wide range of resources designed to help you navigate key areas of early years provision with clear, reliable information to strengthen your knowledge and confidence. This page is another great starting point for trusted advice.

Click [here](#) or scan the QR code to visit the Early Years Alliance Advice and Information page.



Connect with Local Support & Explore the Sefton CVS 'Here For You' Directory

The Here For You online directory is your gateway to over 1,000 voluntary, community and faith organisations delivering more than 2,000 services across Sefton. From family support and wellbeing services to community activities and specialist advice, this comprehensive resource makes it easy to find the help you need or signpost families to local opportunities.

Click [here](#) or scan the QR code to access the directory.



Latest News, Training & Guidance

Free Online Child Development Training from the DfE

The Department for Education is offering a free online training programme designed to give practitioners a strong understanding of child development and practical strategies for supporting children in early years settings, including reception.

The course includes 8 modules covering key themes:

- Understanding child development and the EYFS
- Brain development and how children learn
- Supporting personal, social and emotional development
- Language development in the early years
- Physical development in the early years
- Mathematics
- Effective curriculum and assessment
- Supporting individual differences and needs

Developed by expert practitioners, the training is designed to be practical and reflective. It combines theory with strategies you can apply in your setting, includes opportunities to reflect on your practice, and reinforces your understanding through learning checks and tests. You'll also have access to additional resources and the option to download a certificate of completion once you finish.

This is an excellent CPD opportunity for staff who are new to early years or want to refresh their knowledge in specific areas.

Simply follow the [link](#) and register with your email address to access the content



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Latest News, Training & Guidance

Explore the Sefton Early Years Resource Page

If you're looking for the latest local news, resources and guidance to support your work with children aged 0–5, the Sefton Early Years Resource Page is designed to help practitioners easily access useful information across a range of key topics.

The page is organised into clear sections, each packed with documents, links and materials to support your continuous professional development, including updates from training and opportunities for further learning.

If you have any idea on how to enhance this page, please contact your Quality Improvement Officer.

Click [here](#) for more.

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Best Start in Life Website - Childcare Code

The new Best Start in Life website was launched a few months ago, bringing together services and support for families from pregnancy through to the end of primary school. This platform replaces Childcare Choices and offers a more comprehensive experience for parents, helping them understand what they're entitled to and how to access it.

Please share this website with families in your care and encourage them to sign up for a childcare code before 31st December to ensure they can access funded childcare offers. Early registration is essential for families to benefit from government-funded support.

Settings are also encouraged to start using the Best Start in Life branding to help families recognise these offers and services.

Click [here](#) or scan the QR code to visit and explore the new site.

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Latest News, Training & Guidance

DfE Research: Share Your Reception Experience

The Department for Education (DfE) is inviting Reception teachers and teaching assistants to take part in important research about their experience of training and working in Reception.

The research will run from November 2025 to the end of January 2026 and involves surveys and interviews (lasting no more than 60 minutes) conducted via MS Teams. To thank participants for their time, the DfE is offering an incentive of £70 for those who take part in an interview.

This is a valuable opportunity to share your views and help shape future support for Reception practitioners.

For more details and to register your interest, scan the QR code or visit the Foundation Years website [here](#)

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Become a Maths Champion – Free Year-Long Training Programme

The National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA) and the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) are partnering to deliver the Maths Champions Programme, supporting educators to strengthen children's early mathematical development in line with the DfE Best Start in Life agenda.

This free, year-long online programme is open to all PVI, maintained nursery, and school-based nursery settings. It combines expert guidance with practical strategies to boost confidence and improve outcomes in early maths.

Cohorts start in February, March, April, May and June 2026, so now is the perfect time to register your interest and secure your place.

Click [here](#) or scan the QR code for more information and to register your interest.

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Latest News, Training & Guidance



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Potty Training Guide

Potty training is a key milestone in every child's development and the new guide from Kindred Squared, backed by the government, offers clear, practical advice for parents and carers.

The guide explains why it's best for children's bowel and bladder health to stop using nappies (including reusable nappies, pull-ups and training pants) between 18 and 30 months, and why being out of nappies well before starting Reception is so important.

Helping families with this transition not only supports children's confidence and wellbeing but also ensures they are ready for school life. The only exceptions should be children with a diagnosed medical need, such as a bladder or bowel condition.

Please share this resource with families in your setting so they can access expert guidance and feel supported through this important stage.

Click [here](#) or scan the QR code to view the Potty Training Guide.

Good News & Celebration

Celebrating Netherton Moss Primary School

Transforming the kitchen cupboards into a play island in the nursery classroom at Netherton Moss has created a dynamic hub for social and language development.

By clustering the cupboards into a central, shared space, children are naturally drawn together, encouraging more collaborative play and frequent peer interactions. As they engage in pretend cooking, serving food, or organising the space, they practice turn-taking, negotiating roles, and solving small social problems together.

This imaginative play also enriches their vocabulary, giving them opportunities to use descriptive words, ask questions, and express their ideas more confidently. The island setup invites conversation, cooperation, and creativity, helping children build both strong social connections and essential communication skills.

Written by Michelle Jones, Nursery Teacher



Good News & Celebration

Celebrating Excellence: Sarah Brady Achieves Outstanding!

'The childminder is highly skilled in developing children's communication and language. Children are spellbound as the childminder whispers that she has found something under the table. She reveals a huge letter addressed to the children. Children quiver with excitement as the childminder opens the letter and reads it with them.'

Congratulations to Childminder Sarah Brady, who has achieved 'Outstanding' in all areas in her recent Ofsted inspection. The inspector praised the broad and rich curriculum Sarah offers, which includes exciting experiences such as trips to the beach and woods.

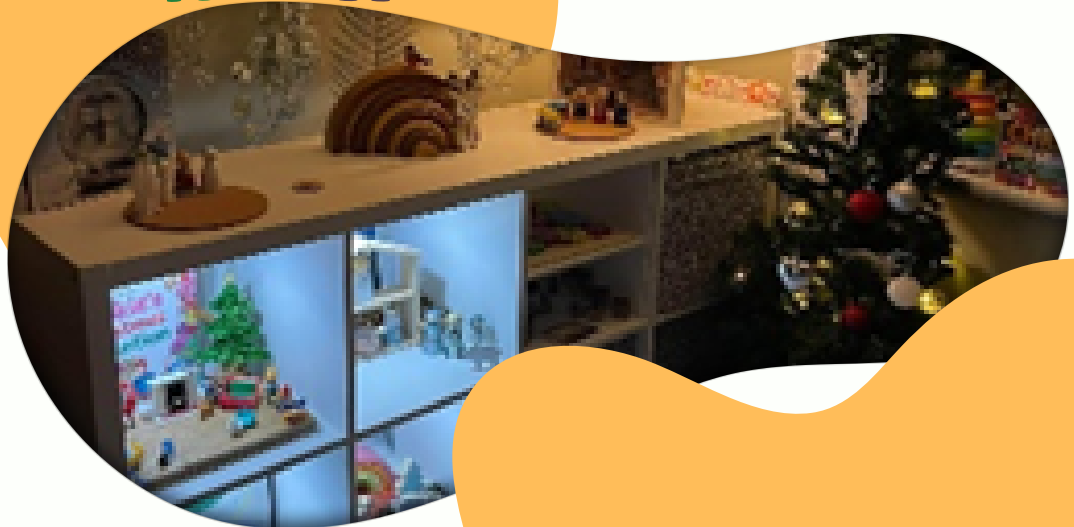
Sarah's passion for early childhood shines through in her work and has even been recognised in Tamsin Grimmer's book *Nurturing Self-Regulation in Early Childhood*. The Ofsted report captured her loving and caring pedagogy perfectly:

'Children are happy, confident and successful in the expert care of this exceptional childminder. The childminder has warm and nurturing relationships with children. She clearly loves the time she spends with them. There are clear and consistent routines in place that help children to understand exactly what is expected of them. As a result, there is a wonderfully calm, relaxed and purposeful atmosphere. Children are polite and kind to each other and behave consistently well.'

Another huge thank you to Sarah for all of her incredible work from everyone in Sefton!



www.sefton.gov.uk/early-years/



Good News & Celebration

Bronze, Silver and Gold: Trauma and Attachment Awards in Sefton

Since starting in 2020 an incredible number of schools and settings have completed, or are in the process of completing the Bronze level award with many going on to achieve the Silver and Gold award.

A key requirement of the award is that the whole school/setting community accesses a comprehensive training package and as a result we estimate that approximately 1,000 early years educators in Sefton have accessed the excellent training delivered by Dr Jenny Nock. Not only is this approach a valuable CPD opportunity but it also ensures that practice and support is consistent when supporting children and their families.

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As an Early Years Team we are in the process of developing an Attachment and Trauma Aware pathway of training and support. The pathway will include a range of training courses and resources which will aim to provide underpinning knowledge and understanding around the importance of:

- Attachment and loving relationships
- Early Brain Development
- ACE's and Trauma
- Self Regulation
- Staff Wellbeing

Contact Heather.pearce@sefton.gov.uk

Click [here](#) or scan the QR code to for more



Upcoming Events / Awareness Weeks

Get Ready for Big Schools' Birdwatch 2026!

The RSPB Big Schools' Birdwatch is back, and it's a fantastic way for children to connect with nature while learning about wildlife. Taking part is simple: spend up to an hour watching and counting the birds in your school grounds, then submit your results to help the RSPB understand how our feathered friends are doing.

This fun, educational activity supports science, maths, and outdoor learning, and it's suitable for all ages. Resources are provided to make it easy to plan and run your birdwatch session.

The Big Schools' Birdwatch runs from 6th January to 13th February 2026. Click [here](#) or scan the QR code to visit their website

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Upcoming Events / Awareness Weeks

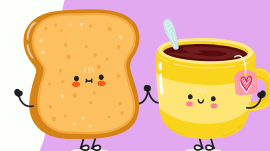
Tea & Toast at Sefton Family Hubs

Join our Family Hubs at their Tea & Toast drop-in sessions for a relaxed space to chat, connect, and share experiences.

These drop-ins offer a friendly environment to talk about the ups and downs of everyday life with others who understand, alongside supportive staff. Themes also link in with Health and Wellbeing Calendars and work with partner organisations to bring useful advice and support. All conversations are open, and parents/carers are invited to talk about whatever's on their mind.

Please share this with families in your setting – everyone is welcome, and no booking is needed. For more information, click [here](#) or scan the QR code.

LET'S
TALK!



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It's Christmas at Sefton Family Hubs!

This festive season, Sefton Family Hubs are spreading joy across our communities with a fantastic range of Christmas activities for families, including:

- Christmas wreath making workshops
- Christmas parties with Santa and his reindeer
- Breakfast, brunch, and supper with Santa
- Christmas Explorers sessions
- Christmas Chefs experiences

While spaces for many of these events are quickly filling up due to high demand, we wanted to take this opportunity to celebrate the incredible work happening in our Family Hubs and thank all our partners for their support over the Christmas period, including Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and Sefton Community Learning Service.

We wish our early years community a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Thank you for everything you do to support children and families across Sefton.

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Upcoming Events / Awareness Weeks

A Focus on the Wraparound Provision in Sefton

At Sefton Council, we're dedicated to promoting the wraparound care provision available in our area. We want to ensure that families are aware of the flexible care options offered by local providers, giving them the support they need for their children's learning and wellbeing.

We're asking all early years professionals to help spread the word. Please let families know about the wraparound care options available and point them in the right direction to find out more.

Families can learn about the wraparound care offer and search for a provider near them by visiting: www.sefton.gov.uk/wraparound



Spotlight on SEND

SEND Parent/Carer Coffee Mornings

Sefton's SEND Coffee Mornings offer a welcoming and informal space for parents and carers of children with special educational needs or disabilities. These sessions are designed to:

- Help families understand SEND processes and the support available in Sefton
- Provide opportunities to meet other parents and carers of children with SEND
- Connect families with professionals from services including:
 - Aiming High
 - Autism and Complex Needs Team (delivering toileting and sleep workshops across venues during the academic year)
 - Early Help
 - Sefton Parent Carers

All children are welcome to attend, and no booking is required. These sessions are a valuable way for families to access advice, share experiences, and feel supported. We encourage all professionals working with children and families to share these coffee mornings with parents and carers in your setting.

For more information, please contact Lauren.Wilding@sefton.gov.uk

North Sefton	Central Sefton	South Sefton
Southport Linaker Family Hub, PR8 5DQ 10am-12pm	Maghull Hudson Family Hub, L31 5LE 10am-12pm	Seaforth South Sefton Adult Education Centre, L21 1 EZ 10am-12pm
7 th November 2025 9 th March 2026 19 th June 2026	10 th October 2025 2 nd February 2026 22 nd May 2026	12 th September 2025 12 th January 2026 16 th April 2026

Reflect and Refresh

Looking Ahead & Support for Your Early Years Setting

As the festive season draws to a close, it's the perfect time to reflect on the achievements of 2025 and look forward to the opportunities ahead. This edition highlights practical resources and training designed to strengthen your practice, ranging from free CPD courses and expert guides to local support networks and national programmes.

Looking into the new year, if you're planning new activities, exploring ways to boost staff confidence, or helping families access childcare codes and wraparound care, we're here to support you every step of the way. Let's make 2026 a year of collaboration, creativity and continued excellence in early years education!

If there's a specific area where you'd like guidance or support, please get in touch with our team.



Poetry for the Soul

www.sefton.gov.uk/early-years/

To mark the end of this newsletter, we would like to share this short poem about kindness at Christmas time:

Santa's Friendly Wave – By Nora Blake

Santa stood on a quiet village street,
giving a small, friendly wave.
There was no crowd, no hurry-
just a warm moment.
A child walking by
stopped in surprise.
The wave felt sincere,
like Santa truly saw the child.
It wasn't grand,
but it felt comforting and real.
The child waved back
with both hands.
All day,
the child felt cheerful.
A simple wave
can carry so much joy.
Sometimes kindness needs only a moment to make a
memory.

