



WELCOME

We're pleased to finally confirm the date for our Autumn Term Early Years Cluster Event (details below), and we're delighted to welcome Ruth Swailes as our guest speaker. Ruth will be sharing her expertise on all things curriculum, guiding us through recent publications and changes in the Early Years sector – including an exploration of the much-discussed Good Level of Development (GLD). This event is open to Headteachers, Managers, Early Years Leads, and Practitioners, so please book early to secure your place.

We also look forward to seeing you at our online Leadership Briefing this **Thursday, 25th September**, where we'll be sharing key updates for the Early Years sector – including important information about the renewed Ofsted Inspection Framework.

With the new term underway, please ensure your whole team is signed up to our Early Years newsletter – we always include information and resources tailored to all practitioner roles across the sector.

As always, we love hearing from you. If you have any questions or need support, don't hesitate to contact the team at early.years@halton.gov.uk.



YOU ARE INVITED TO

Early Years Cluster

Monday 1st December 2025 9.30–3.30

"The Best Start In Life: Getting it right for your children."

With increased emphasis from the DfE on Early Years education, including changes to the EYFS Framework, assessment processes, and the new Ofsted and Writing frameworks, there's unprecedented focus on the learning and development of our youngest children in England.

Join us for an inspiring session with Ruth Swailes—experienced School Improvement Advisor, Early Years lead consultant, and curriculum developer—as she guides us through the latest changes in Early Years education.

With a focus on clarity and confidence, Ruth will share a wealth of research and knowledge of child development to help practitioners to reflect on their current practice and offer real, practical strategies to ensure that you leave empowered to do the right things at the right time to give children the best start in life.



We encourage Managers and Headteachers to join their Pre-school and Reception class practitioners for the morning session

Booking is essential, you can book now by [clicking here](#)

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UPDATES

Childcare Expansion Milestone

To mark the childcare expansion milestone, Prime Minister Keir Starmer has written to parents, reaffirming his *Plan for Change* commitment: ensuring 75% of five-year-olds reach a good level of development by 2028.

We'd appreciate your support in sharing the letter with parents via your channels.

[Read the letter on the DfE Education Hub](#)

FEYE FUNDING

Autumn Term Headcount Week

Please submit your autumn term headcounts by **Monday 29th September**, the Provider Portal will close at midnight on that day. It will reopen for adjustments from **Tuesday 30th September**.



Best Start in Life – New Parent Hub

The Childcare Choices website is now part of the **Best Start in Life** parent hub. This new platform brings together trusted information and support for families from pregnancy through to the early years, including guidance on how working parents can apply for their childcare funding code.

Anyone searching for *Childcare Choices* will be automatically redirected to the new site. Take a look www.beststartinlife.gov.uk/

SAFEGUARDING UPDATES

New Child Safety Guidance

The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) has published updated guidance on button batteries, magnets, and small objects.

[Explore the resources: Child safety: small hazards, big harm – GOV.UK](#)

Why Language Matters in Safeguarding

When we say “*children and young people*” but leave out “*babies*”, we risk overlooking the early years as a unique stage of *childhood that requires specialist practice, just like the teenage years*. Have a read of this NSPCC blog that stresses the importance of including babies in our safeguarding language [Why language matters: the importance of including babies in the language of safeguarding](#). | NSPCC Learning

TRAINING



**Halton's
Early Years
Leadership Briefing**

Important sector updates, including updates for DSL and safeguarding reforms.

If you're an Early Years Manager, Early Years Lead, or a Childminder, be sure to book your place using our online booking form.

**25th September 2025 - 10.00-11.00
OR
25th September 2025 - 18.30-19.30**

Have you booked onto one of our Leadership Briefings this week? Click the button below to book

BOOK NOW



Join Greg Bottrill for...

**DRAWING
CLUB**

Friday 3rd October - 9.30am

Reception Class practitioners don't miss the opportunity to access this bespoke session with Greg Bottrill. Contact early.years@halton.gov.uk to book your place and arrange payment

SEND



**Early Years
SENIF
Workshop**

**Are you familiar with
Halton's SENIF processes?**

**Tuesday 23rd September
1.00-3.00p.m.
Halton Lea Library**



**JOIN
US**

Early Years SENCOs have you booked onto the upcoming SENCO Network Meeting?

**4th November 2025
(1-3pm)**

SENIF Reminder

Before applying for SENIF (SEND Inclusion Funding, formerly known as Top-Up Funding), you must first submit an **Initial Request for Support** to the Early Years Team. This request should be completed online using the following link: [Initial Request for support from Early Years Team | HBC forms](#)

Please note that in order to submit an Initial Request, you will need to upload a **signed Parental Consent Form**. You can access and download the consent form here [Parent permission form - Early Years Team support and SENIF 1.pdf](#)

DON'T MISS OUT!

Bookstart Packs – Supporting Speech & Language

Bookstart is now a targeted offer for toddlers and pre-schoolers. We're working in partnership with the Early Years team and Family Hubs to gift packs to families involved in speech and language intervention programmes, such as Early Talk Boost, encouraging reading at home to support children's development.

Each pack includes: 2 books and Activities and Rhymes. Pre-school packs also include a small craft

Packs are delivered monthly from September to June, with new titles each year. As this is our first year using Bookstart in this way, we appreciate your patience while we work through logistics. Not all settings will receive packs at the same time, and we may need to allocate delivery months.

For any queries, please contact Isobel Ashley at: Isobel.ashley@halton.gov.uk

DID YOU KNOW..?

Keeping your provider details up to date

You can update your email address, contact details, or other business information anytime via the Provider Portal.

Just log in, go to the 'Forms' tab, and complete:

- * Provider Information Form & Permission Form (for all providers)
- * Childminder Information Form (for childminders)

This is the best way to ensure we have your latest details.

 [Visit: Synergy – Providers Page](#)

CHILDMINDERS

DfE Childminder Roadshow

Childminders are invited to join the **DfE's virtual Early Years and Childcare Roadshow**—the first event since the launch of the *Giving Every Child The Best Start In Life* strategy.

This is a great opportunity to:

- * Hear updates from the Department for Education
- * Ask questions
- * Share experiences in virtual breakout sessions

Attendees can choose two sessions to join during the event (e.g.

EY Entitlement & Funding, EY Qualifications & Workforce, EY Quality & SEND and Best Start Family Services

The event will be held online on **Thursday 25th September 18:30-20:00**, please [CLICK HERE](#) to sign up.

SHARE WITH PARENTS



Come and find out if
a career in Early
Years is right for you!

10th September
🕒 9:00-10:00
📍 Halton Lodge Family Hub

8th October
🕒 9:00-10:00
📍 Halton Lodge Family Hub

10th October
🕒 14:00-15:00
📍 Halton Leisure Centre



Promoting Early Years Careers – New DfE Guide

The DfE has launched a new guide, *The Big Switch into Something Big*, as part of the **Do Something Big** campaign to attract more people into the Early Years sector. For parents with children that have just started nursery or school, this could be the perfect time to explore a rewarding new career, so help us spread the word by talking and sharing information with the families you support, and signposting families to one of our drop-in sessions

 [Download the guide: Switch into Something BIG \(PDF\).](#)

Admission to **Primary School** **September 2026**

If your child was born between 01/09/2021 and 31/08/2022 they are eligible to start Reception class in September 2026, and you can apply NOW:

- You must complete a preference form **online** at [School admissions website](https://www3.halton.gov.uk/.../PrimarySecondarySchool.aspx), where you will be given a receipt
- A paper copy of the preference form can also be requested from schooladmissions@halton.gov.uk
- All **online** applicants will receive their offer of a school place electronically on the 16th April 2026
- Offer letters will be posted on the 16th April 2026 to applicants who submitted a paper preference form
- **Don't leave it too late** – you are likely to miss out on the school place you want if you apply late. **Deadline is 15th Jan 2026**



Closing date for Primary School Applications:
15th January 2026



The **deadline** to apply for **Primary 2026** school places is **Thursday 15th January 2026**. Please share and encourage parents to apply. They can apply online using the following link <https://www3.halton.gov.uk/.../PrimarySecondarySchool.aspx>

FAMILY HUBS

Halton Family Hubs – Trusted, Local & Free Support

Halton's Family Hubs offer free, local support for families with children aged 0–19 (or up to 25 with SEND) across Widnes and Runcorn. Professionals can confidently signpost families to services including health visitor clinics, parenting programmes, sensory play, and wellbeing groups.

Antenatal Infant Feeding Session

Dad Matters Stay & Play

Tuesday 7 October, 5.30–7.00pm at
Brookvale Family Hub, Runcorn

Free session for expectant parents to learn about feeding their baby. [More info and booking](#)



Saturday 18 October, 10.00am–12.00pm –at
Ditton Library, Widnes

Drop-in session for dads with children aged 0–2, with play, snacks and informal support. [More info](#)

Please share the Family Hub offer with the families you support. Visit www.haltonfamilyhubs.co.uk for timetables, referrals and online resources.

HHEYS HIGHLIGHTS



Halton Healthy Early Years Status

Supervised toothbrushing is being successfully delivered in Halton – watch this space for more updates! We are still looking for Nurseries and Pre-Schools that are interested in running funded supervised toothbrushing, please scan the QR code to send your request.



Subscribe

If this newsletter has been shared with you via your setting/school and you would like to receive a copy directly to your own inbox please click on the subscribe button and complete the relevant information.



Take a look at the FREE information and resources on
Halton's Communication Hub

Search



Talk Halton



Municipal Building, Kingsway, Widnes WA8 7QF