



WELCOME

I had a wonderful day at Riverside College during Aspire Week, speaking with our early years apprentices about the important career they are beginning – thank you so much for having me!

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas as we continue our visits. I've been lucky enough to enjoy some fantastic Christmas singing and see lots of beautiful tree decorating – it's all very exciting.

Please take part in our "Give Your Dummy to the Elves" campaign this year. You'll find resources in this newsletter and on TALK Halton Facebook and Halton Early Years Instagram to use and share with families.

Best wishes
Sarah

Get in touch with the team on early.years@halton.gov.uk

UPDATES

SENIF Dates – January Onwards

We're pleased to share the upcoming SEN Inclusion Fund (SENIF) dates from January onwards. Please ensure you check the schedule and plan accordingly.

Month	Deadline for submission	EY inclusion Panel date	Feedback
January	Dec 30th 2025	14th January	30th January
February	30th January	11th February	27th February
March	27th February	11th March	27th March
April	27th March	15th April	1st May
May	1st May	13th May	29th May
June	29th May	10th June	26th June
July	26th June	15th July	31st July
August	31th July	12h August	28th August
September	28th August	16th September	25th September
October	25th September	14th October	30th October
November	30th October	12th November	28th November
December	28th November	17th December	5th Jan 2027

Reminder: When making an initial request for support from the Early Years Team, please use the following link and please ensure that written parental consent has been uploaded with the request:

[Early Years' Special Educational Needs inclusion Funding \(SENIF\)](#).

Reminder: Update Autumn Term Sufficiency Data

Please ensure your childcare places, vacancies, and waiting list numbers are updated in the sufficiency tab of the Provider Portal by Friday 28 November 2025.

For queries, contact clare.rowlands@halton.gov.uk.

FEYE FUNDING

Provider Portal – Spring 2026 Estimated Hours

The Provider Portal will be open **8th - 12th December** for you to submit your estimated hours for the Spring 2026 term.

Important:

Please check the age range for each child, as they may move up to the next band if they have a birthday before 31st December.

SAFEGUARDING AND WELFARE

Child Absences – New EYFS Requirement

Since September, the EYFS requires all providers to have clear policies and procedures for managing child absences, including an attendance policy shared with parents and carers. Nursery World recently featured an article by safeguarding expert Rachel Buckler on best practice for responding to absences.

👉 Read the full article here [Nursery World - Safeguarding in 2025 part 4: Following up on child absence](#)

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Applications Open: Thrive Early Years Educator Level 3 Apprenticeship

Delivered by our award-winning sister company, Best Practice Network, this nationally recognised programme helps practitioners build confidence, deepen understanding of early personal, social and emotional development, and gain a Level 3 qualification.

At a glance:

- * Level 3 Early Years Educator qualification
- * Specialism in PSED
- * Duration: 15–18 months
- * Cohort starts: February 2026 (limited places)

Grounded in the Thrive Approach, this apprenticeship goes beyond practical skills—equipping you to support emotional development and create calm, connected environments for young children.

Explore the apprenticeship [Thrive Early Years Educator Apprenticeship Level 3 | The Thrive Approach](#)

SEND

Dingley's Promise – Free Training Opportunities

We are delighted to share that Dingley's Promise is offering fully funded training courses, thanks to support from the *Liverpool and Beyond Stronger Practice Hub*.

Available Courses:

- * *Introduction to Early Years Inclusive Practice*
- * *Having Difficult Conversations with Families*

Book training using the following link [Training - Dingley's Promise](#)

DID YOU KNOW..?

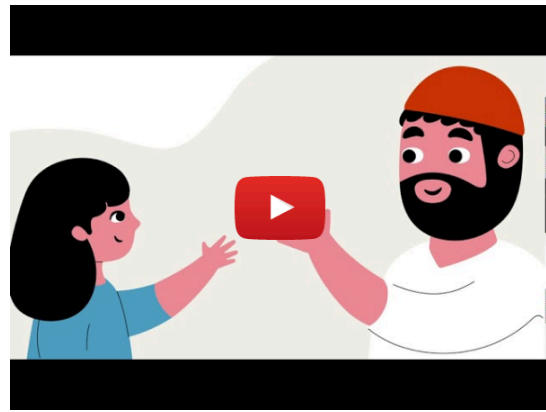
Step into the Baby Room...

"Every time you do a serve and return with a baby or toddler, you are giving them something golden. It's the most important thing you can do."

— Dr Mona Sakr

Serve and return interactions are the foundation of early communication and emotional development. When you

respond to a baby or toddlers sounds, gestures, or expressions, you're building trust, language skills, and brain architecture. These simple, meaningful exchanges create strong connections that last a lifetime.



DON'T MISS OUT!

DfE Research Opportunity for Reception Staff

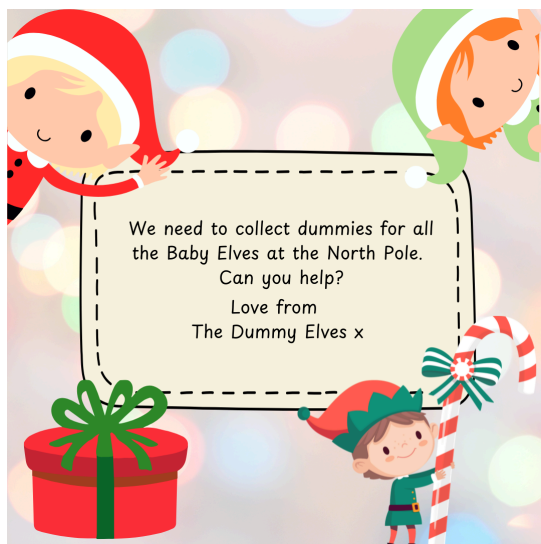
The Department for Education is inviting Reception teachers and teaching assistants to share their experiences of training and working in Reception. Your insights will help shape future improvements.

What's involved?

- Surveys and interviews (up to 60 minutes via MS Teams)
- Research runs from November 2025 to January 2026
- £70 incentive for completing an interview

Interested? Fill in this online form [Reception Teachers: Participate in DfE Research](#)

SHARE WITH PARENTS



Share the Dummy Elf Fun!

This Christmas, let's help our little ones say goodbye to their dummies in a magical way! Our *Dummy Elves* are here to make the transition easier and more exciting. Head over to Halton's Early Years Instagram or the TALK Halton Facebook group for more information

Get ready for some festive fun! 🎄

We'll be sharing family-friendly ideas for an Advent-style countdown to Christmas—perfect for babies, toddlers, and preschoolers, and designed to involve parents too. From simple crafts and sensory play to storytime and kindness activities, these ideas will help you make magical memories every day leading up to Christmas.

🌟 Follow us on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#), and join the countdown!

HHEYS HIGHLIGHTS



Following on from the Baby and Toddler Essentials event, settings interested in booking staff training on infant feeding, including introducing solid foods, can now request a session using the QR code provided.

The session mirrors the session parents attend for continuity and support and covers safe eating, preparation, foods to avoid and much more!

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



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