

# LEARNER **NEWS**

*Happy New Year!*

**The importance of  
Whistleblowing**

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**How to beat the  
January Blues**

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**Spotlight on the  
role of an  
Occupational  
Therapist**

**Congrats  
Sarah!**

**Level 5 Early Years  
Lead Practitioner  
Standard EPA!**





# Welcome back!

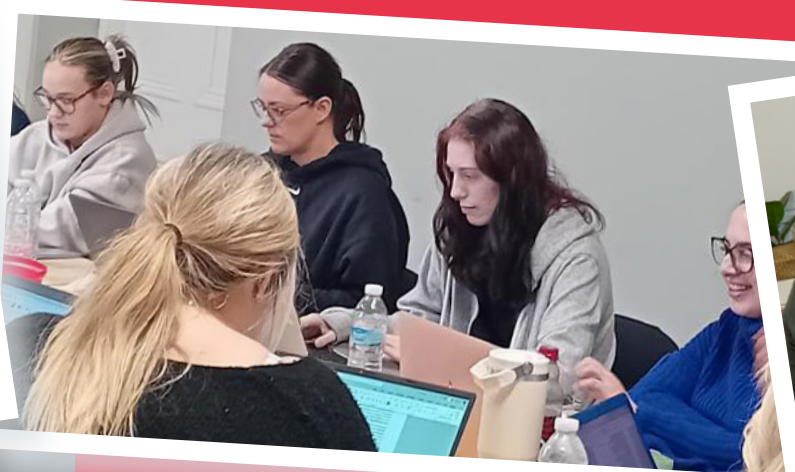
**Busy Bees Education and Training would like to wish each and every one of you a warm welcome back, and a happy New Year for 2026.**

We hope you enjoyed some time over the festive period to relax, unwind, spend time with loved ones and enjoy the celebrations. We are back, and ready to provide continued support, learning and development opportunities for you to be successful within your apprenticeships.

# New Year... New Skills

**The new year is a perfect time to spark some new ideas, build new skills and make the most of every off - the - job learning opportunity which comes your way.**

Why not try setting yourself some new goals to support your continued professional development and work towards achieving these, arrange to shadow a colleague for a day to gain a better understanding of different job roles and gain some new skills or attend a training session or a workshop to gain valuable knowledge which will support you in job



# Blue Monday

As the Christmas trees are taken down and the new year celebrations are well and truly over, and resolutions have been set, returning to normal can feel overwhelming.

Blue Monday is said to be the bleakest day of the year, where many people can feel down and overwhelmed. Blue Monday is always on the third Monday in January, and this year will be Monday 19th January 2026. This name has been given by a UK travel company based on an equation they had completed. While the label may be more symbolic than scientific, the feelings it points to are common. Many people can feel down, have low motivation and lack of energy as we return to our daily lives after the festive period.



## Wellbeing Hints and Tips for Blue Monday

Here are some pointers on how to combat areas to support your own wellbeing not only on blue Monday but every day



**Go for a walk**



**Take a break**



**Limit social media use**



**Exercise**



**Get outdoors for fresh air**



**Practice self-care**



**Do something you enjoy**



**Reflect on failed resolutions and plan to succeed with these this year**



**Talk to family and friends**

If you are feeling low, and this is impacting on your mental health and well being you can access the link below for support from MIND.

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/explore-mental-health/blogs/what-does-blue-monday-mean-our-mental-health>



## APPRENTICESHIP NEWS!

# Celebrating your Success!

A huge congratulations to Sarah who has recently completed the Level 5 Early Years Lead Practitioner Standard EPA. We caught up with Sarah to find out about her journey. Here's what she said....

“

I chose to complete the Level 5 as I am in a senior role and wanted to have a better understanding of how to support the team, and the children within the setting.

It gave me an opportunity to reflect on my style of leadership and offer different ways to approach situations.

I now also have a deeper understanding of theorists and how to apply this to the children's learning and relate it to the Bee Curious curriculum.

My development coach Kelly was really supportive, helping me plan the tasks I needed to do and how to achieve them whilst working full time. I would encourage anyone thinking about doing it to sign up.

”

If you would like to find more about this apprenticeship, speak to your Development Coach

## Functional Skills Motivation!

Functional skills can be challenging at times, especially if you haven't studied English or Maths for a while or have faced previous challenges. We have been speaking to Kayleigh who is working towards level 2 Maths who shared her functional skills journey with us...

“

Maths has never been the easiest part of learning for me, but it has become the most meaningful. When I actually think back to where I started, I remember feeling so unsure of myself, second guessing every single answer and believing some people were just good at maths and I definitely wasn't one of them. Fractions in particular, felt like a different language to me - numbers split up that I couldn't actually put back together. Something changed when people told me to believe in myself and give it ago as I was one of them to say I'm giving up. I wanted to be able to crack it and actually give it try and I wanted to prove to myself I could try and I could do it without giving up. When I now look back at how far I've come, it's the first time I've ever felt proud of myself for something, and it no longer feels like a wall in front of me. I have learned that I can grow. My journey in maths hasn't finished and I still have my exam to go but I am working on it, and I am trying for what feels like the first time in forever. But I am trusting myself and definitely believing in myself. I am so glad I didn't give up, and I tried the best I can do and that's all you can do. I just want to say thank you to everybody who has helped me believe in myself including my development coach Teresa and my maths tutor Rachel, I appreciate you all so much. I hope this helps everybody else who is struggling.

Good luck with your upcoming exams, Kayleigh!

”

## Fantastic Feedback

We are always very keen to gain your feedback. This month we have had some wonderful feedback for one of our Development Coaches, Frances Rogers from Phoebe Vincent who has recently entered gateway.

"I can't thank you enough for your continuous compassion and support through this course, I really appreciate everything you've done to help me on my journey to EPA.

I feel I have changed so much during this time and have grown massively in myself and my confidence and you have been a major influence in helping me find methods to remain calm and manage my anxiety in these meetings. Thank you so very much for everything Frances, I couldn't have made it without you!"

Well done, Frances!

We would love to hear from you...  
Look out for your learner survey links to provide your feedback





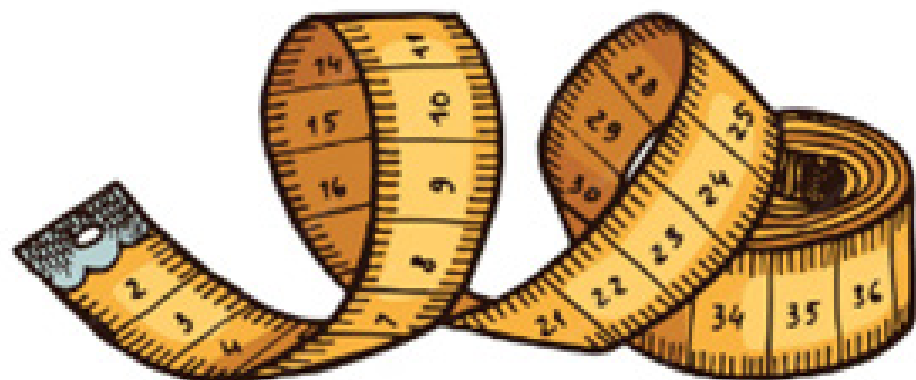
# What's in your Functional Skills Tool Kit?

## Building your functional skills tool kit.

**Developing your functional skills tool kit is a collection of Maths and English capabilities that supports safe, efficient, and professional practice across the nursery environment.**

We will first look at the Maths Measuring Tape.

This represents accuracy and precision — vital for preparing formula milk to the correct ratio, measuring ingredients for cooking or sensory activities, and estimating space when reorganising busy learning areas. In childcare, even small miscalculations can have a noticeable impact, making numerical confidence an essential professional skill.



## Essential and Employability Skills

Working in Early Years is so much more than supporting children's learning—it's about becoming a confident, capable professional who can communicate effectively with children, families, and colleagues. As an apprentice, developing strong essential and employability skills will set the foundation for your future career.

Communication is an essential and employability skills to develop and involves:

**Active listening**

**Nonverbal communication**

**Use of clear language**

**Professional communication**

As you progress in your Early Years apprenticeship, remember that communication is not just a workplace skill—it's a lifelong one. The confidence, clarity, and empathy you build now will support your career in childcare and beyond.

# Health and Wellbeing

## Contact Us

Need to speak with an IQA?  
Advice on your apprenticeship?  
Contact your IQA Team  
[trainingquality@busybees.com](mailto:trainingquality@busybees.com)

In the event you have a  
safeguarding concern that  
impacts on your training please  
contact our DSL team BBT.  
[Safeguarding@busybees.com](mailto:Safeguarding@busybees.com)



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Find out more here <https://totum.com/campaigns/apprentice-extra-is-now-totum-apprentice>



## Dry January

As the new year starts, many people make new year's resolutions or look to make changes in their lifestyle.

Dry January is a month-long break from drinking alcohol which can be a great opportunity to focus on wellbeing, boost energy levels, and start the year feeling refreshed.

Choosing to go alcohol-free, even for a short time, has several benefits. Many people notice better sleep, improved mood, and increased concentration

Dry January doesn't have to be about restriction. It can be a positive challenge—trying new activities, exploring alcohol-free alternatives, or spending time doing things that support your mental and physical health. Whether you take part for the full month or simply reduce your intake, every small step can make a difference.

To find out more <https://alcoholchange.org.uk/help-and-support/managing-your-drinking/dry-january>



**Strut Safe** is a volunteer organisation that operates a nonjudgmental support line who you can contact if you are going home alone until you are safe. The organisation offers a safe space for individuals, and their overall goal is to make sure people get home safely. You can call strut safe if you are worried about making a journey alone, and the call handler is there to keep you company from travelling from one point to another. Calls to Strut Safe are almost always free if you have inclusive minutes within your phone package. Calls to 03 numbers are charged at normal calls rates depending on your mobile provider. Take a look at the information for contact details and opening times of Strut Safe here <https://strutsafe.org/>



# Functional Skills and Early Years L2 and 3 Teaching Sessions

## Functional Skills

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	05/01/2026	06/01/2026	07/01/2026	08/01/2026	09/01/2026
10:15 - 11:45	English Reading: Comparing Texts & Bias	Maths: Fractions (1)	Maths: Angles & Bearings (1)		Maths: Shapes (Perimeter, Area & Volume) (1)
12:00 - 13:30		English Reading: Purpose, Language, Facts & Opinions		English Writing: Sentence, Paragraphs & Planning	Maths: Decimals (1)
13:45 - 15:15	Maths: Percentages (1)		English Reading: Writing Styles & Organisational Features	Maths: Units & Measures (1)	
19:00 - 20:30	English Writing: Grammar & Punctuation		Maths: Averages & Range (1)		

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	12/01/2026	13/01/2026	14/01/2026	15/01/2026	16/01/2026
10:15 - 11:45	Maths: Percentages (2)	Maths: Graphs & Tables (2)	English Writing: Sentence, Paragraphs & Planning		Maths: Non Calculator (2)
12:00 - 13:30	English Writing: Formatting Texts		Maths: Probability (2)	Maths: Ratio & Scales (2)	Maths: Nets & Elevations (2)
13:45 - 15:15		Maths: BIDMAS (2)		English Reading: Purpose, Language, Facts & Opinions	
19:00 - 20:30	Maths: Interest (2)		English Reading: Comparing Texts & Bias		

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	19/01/2026	20/01/2026	21/01/2026	22/01/2026	23/01/2026
10:15 - 11:45	Maths: BIDMAS (3)	English Reading: Comparing Texts & Bias	Maths: Decimals (3)	Maths: Shapes (Perimeter, Area & Volume) (3)	English Writing: Formatting Texts
12:00 - 13:30		Maths: Fractions (3)	English Writing: Grammar & Punctuation		Maths: Units & Measures (3)
13:45 - 15:15	Maths: Averages & Range (3)			English Reading: Purpose, Language, Facts & Opinions	
19:00 - 20:30	English Writing: Sentence, Paragraphs & Planning		Maths: Percentages (3)		

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	26/01/2026	27/01/2026	28/01/2026	29/01/2026	30/01/2026
10:15 - 11:45	English Writing: Grammar & Punctuation	Maths: Angles & Bearings (4)	Maths: Ratio & Scales (4)	Maths: Nets & Elevations (4)	English Writing: Sentence, Paragraphs & Planning
12:00 - 13:30	Maths: Fractions (4)		English Reading: Purpose, Language, Facts & Opinions		Maths: Interest (4)
13:45 - 15:15		Maths: Graphs & Tables (4)		Maths: Non Calculator (4)	
19:00 - 20:30	Maths: Probability (4)		English Reading: Writing Styles & Organisational Features		

## Teaching Sessions

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3
					9.00-11.00 Health and safety	
4	10.00-12.00 - Safeguarding	5	6	7	8	10
		9.30-10.30 Leading within an Early Years Setting	9.30-11.00 Development, assessment, play and pedagogy 2.00-3.00 Health, wellbeing and resilience		11.00-12.00 safeguarding 2.00-3.00 Working in partnership with others	
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
	9.30-10.30 Reflective Practitioner 12.00-1.00 EYP 2 EPA support session 2.00-3.00 Learner off the job support session	10.00-11.00 - Using technology in early years 12.00-1.00 - EPA support session EYE 3		9.30-10.30 - EPA Support Session EYLP5		
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
		11.30-12.30 - Equality and Diversity		9.30-11.30 - Working in Partnership with others	9.30-11.30 - Development, Assessment, Play and Pedagogy	
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
				9.30-11.30 - Health & safety 2.30-4.30 - Safeguarding	9.30-11.00 - Development, assessment play & pedagogy	



Please take a look at the Functional Skills and Teaching session calendars to select the sessions you would like to attend. Remember to contact your development coach to ask to be booked onto these.



## Continued Professional Development (CPD)

### Focus on Theory: B.F. Skinner and John Watson.

Understanding why children behave the way they do is underpinned by theories of Behaviourism developed by psychologists such as B.F. Skinner and John Watson. These theories help us see behaviour as something children learn from the responses they receive.

#### Behaviourism theories suggest:

- Children learn behaviours through experience, not just through internal thoughts or feelings.
- Behaviour is shaped by what happens after it—the consequences.
- Positive experiences help children repeat positive behaviour; confusing or negative responses may lead to unwanted behaviour.

#### Positive reinforcement

Positive reinforcement is a strategy used to encourage children to repeat positive behaviours, by offering praise for wanted behaviours, this could include:

- Verbal praise
- Smiles, high-fives, thumbs up
- Allowing children to hear achievements being shared with others
- Being rewarded with a special responsibility or a sticker
- Enjoyable play activities.

It is important when using positive reinforcement that this is consistent to ensure that children understand expectations.

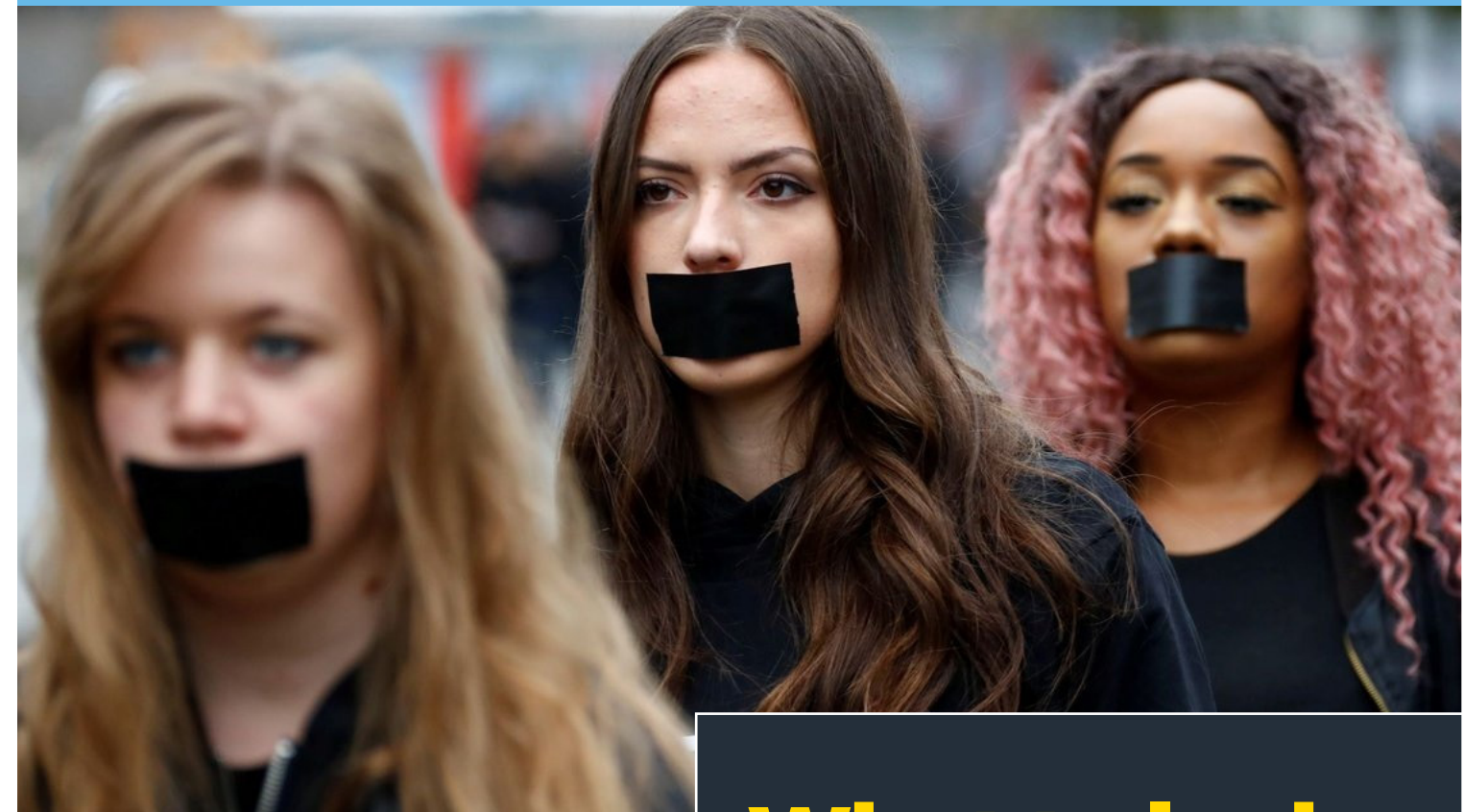


To find out more about Behaviourism you could do some further reading on the work of B.F. Skinner and John Watson.

<https://www.earlyyears.tv/b-f-skinner-operant-conditioning-and-behaviourism-theories/>

<https://www.firstdiscoverers.co.uk/child-development-theories-john-watson/>

# Safeguarding Human Trafficking



Human Trafficking is a serious crime where people are forced, tricked or persuaded into exploitation. This could be forced labour, sexual exploitation, domestic servitude or criminal exploitation. It is a global issue that affects people of all ages, including children.

**You could speak to your Designated Safeguarding Lead or contact the Police on 101 or 999 in an emergency.**

To find out more visit the National Crime Agency website

<https://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/what-we-do/crime-threats/modern-slavery-and-human-trafficking>

## What to look out for...

- Appearing controlled or accompanied everywhere by someone
- Reluctant to speak for themselves
- Scared, withdrawn or confused
- Poor living or working conditions
- Not having access to ID
- Unexplained injuries

**If you are worried about someone  
Speak Up.**





# Whistleblowing

You may have heard in recent weeks about the case of a nursery worker in London pleading guilty to a string of sexual abuse charges. You can find out more about this [here](#)

This shocking and awful case highlights the vital importance of strong safeguarding practices and reinforces the need for all staff to remain vigilant and confident in reporting concerns.

## What Is Whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is when you report concerns about unsafe or harmful behaviour within your workplace. This might include:

- Poor or unsafe practice
- Neglect or abuse
- Inappropriate behaviour by colleagues
- Serious breaches of policies or procedures
- Anything that puts children's safety or wellbeing at risk

Whistleblowing isn't about getting someone into trouble - it's about keeping children safe.



## Why is whistleblowing important?

You are required to follow statutory safeguarding guidance, and it is our professional duty to speak up if we are concerned. Babies and children can't always tell us when something is wrong. Practitioners are their voice.

## Barriers to whistleblowing

Some people may feel nervous about speaking up for fear that they could be wrong, getting someone into trouble or cause conflict, but it is important to remember that you have a duty to safeguarding children in your care and you are protected by law when reporting genuine concerns.

## How to whistle blow

Your setting will have a whistleblowing policy and procedure which will tell you how to raise concerns. This should be followed, and your DSL will support you with this. If your concern is about the DSL your settings policy and procedure will tell other ways can raise your concerns. Your Development Coach can also offer support and guidance. It is important that you follow up any concerns you raise to ensure that the correct action is taken. You may not be told what action is being taken; however, you should be informed that action has been taken.

## Other ways to whistleblow

**Contact Ofsted** whistleblowing hotline on 0300 1233155 (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday) or email [whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk)

**NSPCC whistleblowing** advice line is available. Staff can call 0800 0280285 - 08:00 to 20:00, Monday to Friday and 09:00 to 18:00 at weekends. The email address is: [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk).



## The role of LADO

The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) is responsible for managing and overseeing concerns or allegations made against adults who work with children. Every local authority in England has a LADO, and their role is a key part of safeguarding.

The LADO must be informed when there is a concern that someone working or volunteering with children has:

- Harmed a child
- May pose a risk of harm
- Behaved inappropriately towards a child
- Behaved in a way outside of work that raises safeguarding concerns

LADO will ensure concerns are handled quickly and fairly, offering guidance to professionals, coordinating with relevant agencies, and helping to protect children by managing potential risks.

You can find out more about the role of LADO on your Local Authority Website



# What's going on in January

5th January Twelfth Night  
11th January Human Trafficking Awareness Day  
13th January Lohri  
17th January – 23rd January Energy Saving Week  
25th January Burns Nights  
26th January Australia Day  
25th January St Dwynwen's Day  
27th January Holocaust Remembrance Day  
27th January – 2nd February Story Telling Week  
30th January Parent's Mental Health Day

## January is Cervical Cancer Awareness Month

<https://www.macmillan.org.uk/cancer-awareness/cervical-cancer-awareness>

Cervical Cancer is a cancer which is found anywhere in the cervix, the opening between the vagina and the womb. Symptoms can include unusual vaginal bleeding, changes to vaginal discharge, pain in lower back, tummy or during sex.

To find out more about Cervical Cancer <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/cervical-cancer/symptoms/>

### Cervical Screening (Smear Test)

All women aged 25 to 64 are invited for cervical screening every 5 years. It's not a test for cancer; it's a test to help prevent cancer. Invitations for screening are sent through the NHS App, by text or letter to tell you how to book an appointment. If you missed your last Cervical Screening appointment, contact your GP Surgery to arrange an appointment.

Find out more about Cervical Screening here

<https://www.nhs.uk/tests-and-treatments/cervical-screening/what-is-cervical-screening/>



# Safeguarding

**What's  
happening  
in your area?**



## North West

Kids care home concerns include restrain incidents

[Click here to read more](#)

## West Midlands

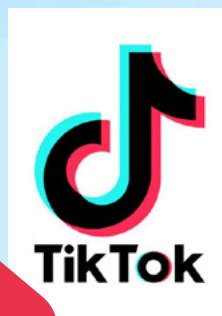
Girl racially abused and assaulted in city centre

[Click here to read more](#)

## South West

South West Police launch first-of-its-kind TikTok and Snapchat campaign

[Click here to read more](#)



## Scotland

Scottish government orders review of grooming gangs evidence

[Click here to read more](#)

## Yorkshire and the Humber

Arrests After Non-Recent Child Sexual Abuse Investigation

[Click here to read more](#)

## North East

Domestic abuse survivor speaks out: "I'm no longer in that dreadful relationship - I realise I deserve better."

[Click here to read more](#)

## East Midlands

More than 100 knives handed in during amnesty

[Click here to read more](#)

## East of England

Friends Against Scams

[Click here to read more](#)

## London

MReport Fraud service goes live with full public launch in January 2026

[Click here to read more](#)

## South East

Eastbourne man jailed for child sex offences

[Click here to read more](#)



TikTok



# Level 5 Workshops

If you are studying Level 5 Early Years Lead Practitioner with us, we have some monthly online workshops planned for next year. These sessions are drop-in sessions where you can come along to ask questions or complete some work with a Development Coach on hand for support.

23rd January 2026

20th February 2026

20th March 2026

17th April 2026

22nd May 2026

19th June 2026

24th July 2026

28th August 2026

18th September 2026

23rd October 2026

20th November 2026

11th December 2026

Speak to your Development Coach if you would like to be booked on to any of these sessions.



# Have you heard of the Too Good To Go App?



Too Good To Go a simple app that helps you to enjoy good food at ½ price or less, while preventing food going to waste. Many Cafés,

Supermarkets and Restaurants list their end of day items which you can pick up at a discounted price. What's not to love, help the environment by reducing food waste and grab delicious food at a fraction of the price and you might even find a new local Cafe, Bakery or Restaurant to try.



According to WWF (2021), 40% of the food that we produce globally goes to waste. This means that 2.5 billion tonnes of food is wasted every year. This equates to 80,000 kilograms of food being wasted around the world, every single second.

**Find out more here**

<https://www.toogoodtogo.com/about-food-waste>



# Have you ever wondered what next?

Thinking about your next steps in your career?

**Children's Occupational Therapists work collaboratively with families, settings, and other professionals to support children's participation and independence. They can work across a wide range of environments, including NHS hospitals, community therapy teams, schools, nurseries, children's centres, SEND and specialist provisions. They help children with:**

- Fine and gross motor development
- Sensory processing differences
- Play skills and exploration
- Emotional regulation
- Self-care skills (feeding, dressing, toileting)
- Seating, positioning, and accessibility
- Supporting children with SEND and developmental delays

To find out more about this role and entry requirements visit

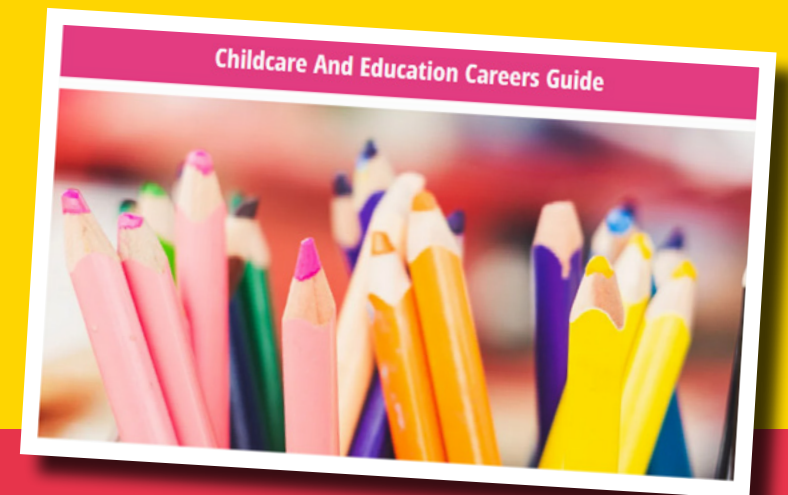
<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/allied-health-professionals/roles-allied-health-professions/occupational-therapist>

**Want more careers, education, information and guidance speak to your Development Coach or National Careers Service website - <https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/>**



## Spotlight on The Role of an Occupational Therapist

**Take a look at the Childcare and Education Career Guide [here](#) to find about more about careers in Childcare and Education**



## What is a personal development plan?



Having a personal development plan helps you identify your own goals and aspirations and helps you plan SMART targets to achieve your goals.

**Have you started your PDP?**

Your DC will help you in creating your PDP.



We would love to hear your ideas and suggestion of content you would like to be included in our future editions. Please scan the QR code to share your thoughts and ideas:



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Education and Training