

A four-step planning tool to help you make the best spending choices

The Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) has one purpose: to give every child a fair start in life.

This planning tool introduces key findings from high-quality research to help you reduce the learning gap between children from lower-income backgrounds and others.

You can work through the questions in each step flexibly, in ways that work best for your setting.



For further guidance and support, see our [Guide to the Early Years Pupil Premium](#)

Step 1: Explore and reflect together

Key principles

Children need to gain firm foundations for learning in their early years. Language underpins children's thinking and learning, and should be a priority. Children from lower-income backgrounds may also need extra help with their personal, social and emotional development.

Involve colleagues. Observe everyday practice across your setting. Gather the team's views on the children's needs and how best to respond to them.

Start with self-evaluation. What are your children's strengths and needs? This will help you focus your EYPP priorities. You could use some of your EYPP to release staff to work together and unite around your priorities. People value what they feel part of.



What are your priorities for change?

- Do children eligible for the EYPP have delays in any areas of learning and development?
- In particular, do you notice delays in speech, language or communication?
- Do you have information you can use from a robust language screening tool?
- What other strengths and needs do you notice?
- If most children move on to the same primary school: what do Reception outcomes suggest about strengths and challenges?

Step 2: Make plans

Key principles

Children from lower-income backgrounds benefit most from high-quality early education and care. To develop quality, you need to develop the knowledge, skills, and practice of the whole team. That will benefit every child, and especially those eligible for the EYPP.

Spend your EYPP on evidence-informed professional development. It's a well-proven way to develop quality and benefit eligible children.

Quality of practice matters more than buying new resources. Some targeted purchases (such as books for interactive reading) can help, but resources alone do not close learning gaps.

A balanced approach

A balanced approach combines:

- Developing quality practice across your setting. This will deliver the greatest benefits for children from lower income backgrounds
- Tailoring support in response to children's needs
- Embedding changes to practice over time so that your EYPP spending benefits children in the future

When you spend your EYPP in this way, you maximise your chances of success.

Develop quality practice

You could choose a programme that offers ongoing staff training, like *Maths Champions* or *Concept Cat*. Research tells us these programmes improve outcomes for all children. What's more, they have an even bigger impact on children from lower-income backgrounds.

You could also design your own professional development programme. The EEF's Early Years Evidence Store and the Guide to Professional Development in the Early Years can help you do this. You will also need to plan ongoing training and support, so the team keeps developing the quality of practice. You could also contact your local Stronger Practice Hub for more support and to access free professional development.

One-off training events rarely lead to lasting improvements.

Tailor personalised support

Some children will need extra help.

For example, interactive reading tends to benefit children with stronger language skills most. So, children with delayed language may need more targeted support.

Potential uses of EYPP include:

- extra staff hours for 1:1 or small-group shared reading
- a robust language screening tool. You could combine this with professional development to promote children's communication
- build in time to embed changes to practice – it isn't easy to make changes stick



How strong are your plans?

- Have you planned enough professional development to build whole-team knowledge over time?
- Is everyone clear about the changes they need to make to their daily practice?
- Is there ongoing support to embed those changes so they become everyday?
- Have you identified children who need extra support and planned for this?

Step 3: Take action

Key principles

Effective implementation takes time. Once priorities are clear, plan ongoing support for the team.

Don't take on too much. Focus on a small number of changes and do them well.

It's important to build in time to follow-up training, so it leads to changes in practice. Those follow-ups might include:

- peer observation
- mentoring
- time for reflection in supervision meetings

Some settings choose to work with others locally, pooling their EYPP budgets and learning together.



How well are you implementing change?

- Have you planned in enough time to help staff make changes?
- How will you know if any staff need extra support?
- Have you got a realistic plan to check impact?
- Have you built in time to gather and reflect on your own observations? Do you have information to act on (e.g. from a robust language screening tool)?
- Have you planned in time to reflect on challenges and celebrate successes together?

Step 4: Make changes stick

Key principle

Think long-term. Improving outcomes for children eligible for EYPP takes time. It involves making thoughtful changes to everyday practice over the long term.

You might want to:

- plan support over a 12–24 month cycle, including refresher training and induction for new staff
- build in regular team reflection to review progress and adapt practice
- plan times to monitor and evaluate: are you achieving the impact you planned for?



Do you need to adjust your plans?

- Are the planned changes to practice still happening?
- How can you support new staff to adopt the changes?
- Do new cohorts of children need you to change some of your approaches?
- Have you continued to reflect on challenges and celebrate successes together?

At the EEF, we think that a child's family income shouldn't be a barrier to their achievement and wellbeing in the early years.

That's why it's important to work with families and identify which children are eligible for the EYPP. By making good use of the increased funding for the EYPP, you can help every child to flourish.

Explore other resources from the EEF to find out more:

[Guide to the Early Years Pupil Premium](#)

[Early Years Evidence Store](#)

[Guide to Effective Professional Development in the Early Years](#)

Contact your local [Stronger Practice Hub](#). They can offer free Professional Development and help you make changes to practice.