

EARLY YEARS SENIOR LEADER LEVEL 7 APPRENTICESHIP

A fully funded 14-month leadership programme for senior early years and nursery leaders, with flexible study that fits around your role and the option to fast-track to a Master's degree (see below).

What is the Early Years Senior Leader Programme?

The Early Years Senior Leader Programme is a leadership development pathway crafted specifically for leaders in early years settings—nurseries, pre-schools, children's centres, or multi-site early years trusts.

The Programme is built around the Level 7 Senior Leader apprenticeship standard, adapted to the unique challenges and opportunities of the early years sector.

Who should apply for the School Senior Leader Apprenticeship Apprenticeship?

You should be employed in an early years setting in England for the duration of the programme, and you should already hold a leadership or management role, such as:

- Nursery manager
- Lead Practitioner
- Early Years Teacher (with EYTS)
- SENCO in early years settings
- Nursery/Pre-school Principal or Director
- Early Years Lead (multi-site)
- Assistant Director / Deputy in early years services
- Business or operations manager for early years sites

Learn more and apply:
bestpracticenetwork.co.uk/EYLeader

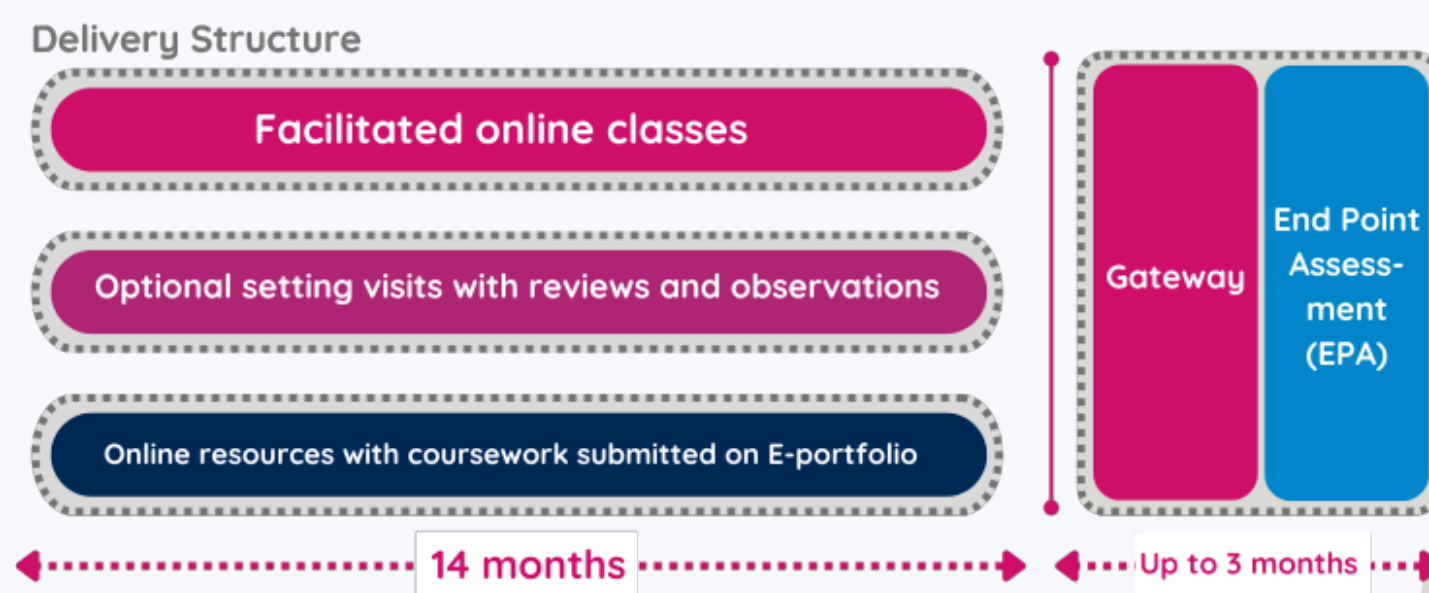


HOW IS THE PROGRAMME DELIVERED?

The apprenticeship is completed over 14 months and is designed to flex around your existing school commitments. Learning is structured so you can decide when to schedule activities, making it practical alongside a busy leadership role.

You will engage in a blend of:

- Early-Years-based leadership practice – applying learning directly in your setting
- Formal learning – structured modules that build advanced leadership knowledge
- Coaching – 1:1 guidance tailored to your goals
- Independent study and assessment – at a pace that works for you End-point



How much does it cost?

For most early years settings, this programme comes at no cost and our friendly team is waiting to advise and help you to access funding.

Levy-paying organisations: Until 31 December 2025, nurseries and early years groups in England that pay into the Apprenticeship Levy can use those funds to cover the full course fee of £14,000 (including residential). Neither the apprentice nor the setting pays anything.

Non-levy paying organisations: Smaller nurseries and providers can pay 5% of the fee (just £700). The Government covers the remaining 95%.

This means that whether you're a single-site nursery or a large group, the Early Years Senior Leader apprenticeship is an affordable way to develop your leaders at master's level.

Learn more and apply:

bestpracticenetwork.co.uk/EYLeader

Early Years Master's Pathway

Turn your professional experience into a master's — no degree required.

Early Years Senior Leader Apprenticeship



Complete our Apprenticeship Levy-funded Early Years Senior Leader Apprenticeship to earn 120 Master's credits.



**Best
Practice
Network**



**60 Credit dissertation module
with Chester University**

**Complete a 60 credit dissertation
module with Chester University for £3k.**



**University of
Chester**

MA in Educational Leadership



**You now have 180 Master's credits and
Chester University will award you a full
MA in Educational Leadership!**

Learn more and apply:

bestpracticenet.co.uk/EYLeader



Fast-Track to a Master's

Turn your Early years Senior Leader apprenticeship into an
MA in Educational Leadership

No degree? No problem

- You do not need a bachelor's degree to take this route
- If you are eligible to start this Level 7 apprenticeship, you are automatically eligible for the Master's fast track
- Your professional experience in early years leadership is recognised and valued by the University of Chester and Best Practice Network

1. Complete the Early Years Senior Leader Apprenticeship

- Fully funded through the Apprenticeship Levy - no cost to you or your setting in most cases. Just £700 for non-levy paying settings.
- Delivered at Master's level and formally recognised by the University of Chester.
- By completing the programme, you gain 120 Master's-level credits

2. Add a Dissertation Module (£3,210)

- Choose to continue with a final 60-credit dissertation, studied online with the University of Chester
- This is the only cost – just £3,210, compared with the usual £10,000+ Master's fee.
- You'll be fully supported with:
 - 1:1 dissertation supervisor
 - Personal tutor for pastoral and academic support
 - Study Skills & Library Services Teams: webinars, 1:1 sessions, assignment and referencing support, and digital resource training

3. Graduate with a Master's in Educational Leadership

- Earn a respected Master's degree for a fraction of the standard cost.
- Minimal extra study required – the dissertation builds on your apprenticeship work.
- Open doors to senior leadership, consultancy, and new opportunities across early years

A fully funded apprenticeship + a low-cost dissertation = a clear, supported, and affordable pathway to a Master's degree.

Fast-Track to a Master's



Associate Professor, Steve Lambert, Chester University

For details on how to use the master's credits earned through the Early Years Senior Leader Apprenticeship to complete a full MA with the University of Chester, please contact Associate Professor Steve Lambert for more information.



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chester.ac.uk/study/course-search/educational-leadership-ma/



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