



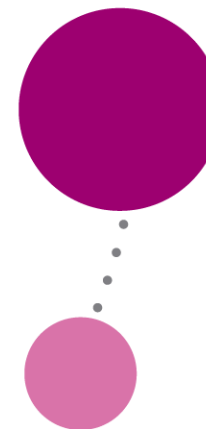
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Early Years Senior Leader Level 7 Apprenticeship



Welcome!

This session is designed to inform you about the **Early Years Senior Leader Level 7 Apprenticeship (EYSLA)**.

It is 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.

We'll have a Q&A at the end, so please share your questions in the chat anytime.



What is the Early Years Senior Leader Programme?

The Early Years Senior Leadership Apprenticeship (EYSLA) is a Level 7 programme designed for experienced early years professionals who are ready to take the next step in their leadership journey.

It combines strategic leadership training with practical application, helping leaders strengthen their impact across settings, improve outcomes for children and drive sustainable improvement within their organisation.

The programme is equivalent to a master's-level qualification and includes regular coaching, 1:1 support and opportunities to collaborate with other senior leaders in the sector.

Based on the Senior Leader Apprenticeship Standard Level 7 in the same way that the popular [Headteacher Programme](#) was based on the same standard.



Why is this the first and last EYSLA intake?

This is the final EYSLA intake because government funding for Level 7 apprenticeships is being withdrawn at the end of 2025 – first and final chance to apply!

We created the EYSLA in response to a demand from nursery managers and directors and a clear gap in progression for our existing learners. Many of our Level 6 Early Years Initial Teacher Training (EYITT) graduates and Level 5 Early Years Lead Practitioner (EYLP) apprentices told us they wanted a next step - but there was no higher-level apprenticeship specifically designed for early years.

Drawing from our expertise and experience in early years education and leadership development, we built the Early Years Senior Leader Apprenticeship.

Who should apply for the EYSLA?

The EYSLA is for experienced early years professionals who are:

- Leading teams or managing settings and ready to take on greater strategic responsibility
- Passionate about improving quality and outcomes across multiple rooms, settings, or organisations
- Interested in developing the leadership, financial, and operational skills needed to influence at a senior level
- Keen to join a community of ambitious early years leaders and make a lasting difference across the sector
- **Requirements:** 2 years' senior leader experience, Level 4/5 qualification, employed in a setting, must have a line manager

Who has already applied?

Role	Number
Nursery / Preschool Managers	54
Deputy and Assistant Managers	21
Room Leaders and Practitioners	10
SENCo / Inclusion Leads	6
Owners, Directors and Senior Leaders	15
Childminders / Early Years Providers	4
Teachers and Education Leads	5

Master's Fast-Track (Optional)

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



Talk to Steve

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.



s.lambert@chester.ac.uk



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



Associate Professor, Steve Lambert, Chester University



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Tatia Singleton – Virtual Classroom Tutor



Qualifications

- Master's Degree in *Early Childhood Education*
- Early Years Professional (EYP) Status
- TAQA Assessor Award

Experience

- Over 22 years' experience in Early Years leadership and practice
- Extensive background in Nursery and Children's Centre Management
- Proven success in multi-site leadership, driving quality improvement and team development

Sector Expertise

- Deep understanding of early years pedagogy, child development, and family support
- Skilled in strategic leadership, curriculum design, and workforce development
- Committed to high-quality, inclusive early years provision

How is the programme delivered?

The EYSLA is delivered through a flexible blend of learning designed to fit around a busy leadership role.

Facilitated online classes with experienced facilitators and guest speakers

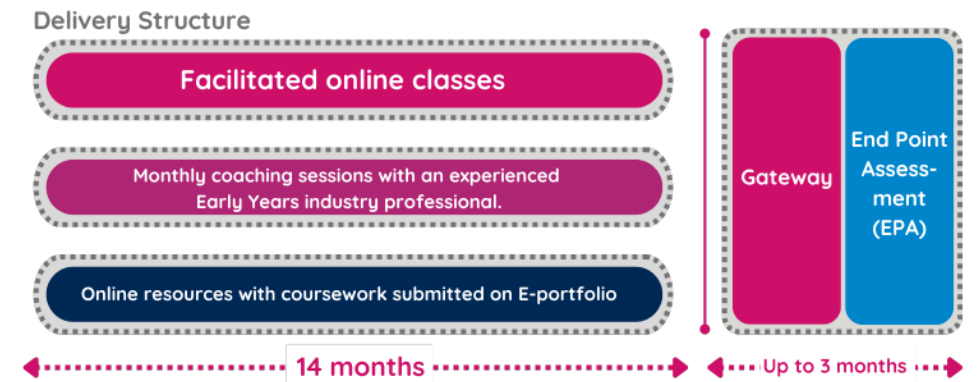
Peer learning through discussion groups and collaborative tasks (breakout rooms)

Self-directed study and reflective practice activities

Work-based projects that apply learning directly to your setting

Off-the-job training – see next slide

1:1 coaching and mentoring from your dedicated apprenticeship tutor



Guided learning hours

EY School Senior Leader Standard	
First Day	First day of learning - Live event with guest speakers: 2 hours.
Induction	1 hour tripartite meeting with apprentice, employer and tutor. In-depth discussion of the programme and individual roles + training plan agreement.
Performance Coaching	13 monthly 1 hour coaching sessions with an experienced Early Years industry professional. Training plan used to guide discussions.
Live classrooms	10 monthly 90 minute facilitated online classes focussing on key themes. 10 supplementary podcasts to enhance learning.
Online learning	24 hours of rich multimedia online learning accessed through BUD virtual learning environment. 2 hours/month.
Off-the-job training	Skills and behaviours, learning and practice acquired as part of the off the job training (OTJT) as shared on contracts. 8 hours portfolio building.
Summative Assessment Stage	Strategic Business Proposal: 8 Hours
Guided learning hours	68 guided learning hours over 14 months



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What is Off the Job Training?



Off-The-Job Training Example

Tripartite review meeting (60 mins) – A structured review with the apprentice, line manager, and tutor to discuss progress against the programme and identify areas for further development.

Shadowing line manager (45 mins) – The apprentice shadows a senior leader to observe leadership decision-making, strategic planning, and quality improvement in action.

Peer observation (30 mins) – The apprentice observes a colleague or peer to reflect on leadership approaches, communication, and the effectiveness of team dynamics.

Reflective notes (30 mins) – Dedicated time to document learning from the week, linking practice to leadership theory and programme learning outcomes.

E-learning: Strategic Leadership and Change (1 hr) – The apprentice completes an online module exploring leadership theory, change management, and strategic planning.

Training video + reflection (1 hr) – The apprentice watches a leadership-focused video and completes a short written reflection on how it applies to their own leadership practice.

Weekly reflection (30 mins) – A focused session to review progress, identify leadership challenges, and plan actions for the coming week. **Mentor meeting (45 mins)** – A one-to-one discussion with the mentor to review progress, evaluate leadership impact, and plan future development goals.

Off-The-Job Training - EYSLA Timetable

Off-the-Job Training - Learning on the job, not leaving the job

Over the duration of the programme, apprentices complete 348 hours of the job training at a rate of 6 hours/week.

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Morning (8:30–11:30am)	Team briefing and operational planning	Staff supervision preparation	Shadowing line manager(45 mins) – Reviewing quality improvement plan	Peer observation (30 mins) – Safeguarding review	Reflective notes (30 mins) – Strategic priorities check-in
Midday (11:30–1:30pm)	Lunch break – Staff cover planning	E-learning: Strategic Leadership and Change (1 hr)	Lunch break – Policy review	Lunch break – Finance and budgeting tasks	Training video + reflection (1 hr)
Afternoon (1:30–4:30pm)	Team development activity – Staff 1:1s	Weekly reflection (30 mins) – Catch-up with deputy	Virtual classroom 3pm-5pm (2 hours)	Mentor meeting (45 mins) – Individual Learning Plan	Team review and planning for next week



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What will I learn on the EYSLA?

The programme is built around **10 core leadership themes** designed to develop your strategic knowledge, skills and behaviours as a senior Early Years leader.

- **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)** Learn how to lead ethically and embed social purpose in your work, balancing organisational goals with the wider social good.
- **Ethical Leadership Strengthen** your ability to make principled decisions, act with integrity, and model inclusive, values-led leadership.
- **Human Resources** Build expertise in recruitment, retention, staff development, performance management, and creating a culture where teams thrive.
- **Coaching and Mentoring** Develop your coaching and mentoring skills to nurture talent and foster a culture of continuous professional growth.
- **Critical Analysis and Evaluation** Learn to examine evidence, reflect on practice, and make data-informed decisions that drive improvement.
- **Creating a Strategic Business Proposal** Gain the skills to research, design, and present strategic business cases—essential for innovation and growth.
- **Organisational Values** Explore how to define, embed, and align your organisation's vision, mission, and culture.
- **Finance, Workforce Planning and Procurement** Understand budgeting, resource management, and sustainable workforce planning to ensure long-term success.
- **Operational Management** Strengthen your leadership of day-to-day operations, ensuring high-quality provision and effective systems.
- **Governance and Risk Management** Learn to evaluate governance structures, assess risk, and implement accountability frameworks that protect and strengthen your organisation.

Employer requirements

Attend learner reviews

Allow time for apprentices to attend monthly virtual classrooms

Provide apprentice with off the job training

Provide your apprentice with a mentor

Provide regular support, feedback and guidance to the apprentice

Provide apprentices with opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills and behaviours



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Funding

Early Years Senior Leader:

Programme cost

~~£14,000~~ £0 with

Apprenticeship Levy funding

Maximum employer contribution: £700

Total cost (non-Levy funded): £700 + VAT

Paid in easy instalments by your setting:

💷 £35 per month for 16 months

🎓 £140 completion payment

What is the levy fund?

The English apprentice levy fund is controlled by the Department for Education and was created as a long-term funding solution for companies to hire and train apprentices.

Our apprenticeship programmes qualify for funding from the English apprentice levy fund. Best Practice Network provides support to candidates and their employers to access this funding.

For guidance on how the funding routes apply to your setting, speak to one of our apprenticeship experts on +44 (0) 117 920 9428 or email enquiries@bestpracticenetwork.co.uk

Enrol your employees

Employers should contact Best Practice Network via enquiries@bestpracticenetwork.co.uk to reserve a place on the required programme.

We will then support you with gathering all necessary information, recruitment, registering with Apprenticeship Service Account and funding applications.

£ Funding routes

If your setting contributes to the apprenticeship levy fund

Levy paying employers can access their fund contributions through their **Apprenticeship Service Account**. You can use this service to manage the funds you have available for apprenticeship training in England.

If your setting does not contribute to the apprenticeship levy fund

You pay 5% towards the cost of the training for your apprentice. The remaining 95% will be paid by the government.

Apprenticeship levy transfer

Employers with unspent funds can **transfer up to 25%** of that contribution to another employer. That means you can benefit from the levy contributions of a different organisation to cover the full costs of an apprenticeship for your setting.



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Supporting Every Learner to Succeed

At Best Practice Network, every learner matters.

We provide tailored support to ensure all apprentices have the best chance to thrive — academically, personally, and professionally.

Our Learner Support Includes:

BPN Boost

Wellbeing, career planning, and confidence-building resources

Technology & Equipment Support

Access to laptops, data, or specialist tools when needed

Additional Learner Support ALS

Support for learning differences such as dyslexia, ADHD or mental health challenges

1-to-1 Tutor Support

Regular check-ins, progress reviews, and personalised learning plans

Extra Learning Resources

Podcasts, videos, and materials that make learning accessible for all



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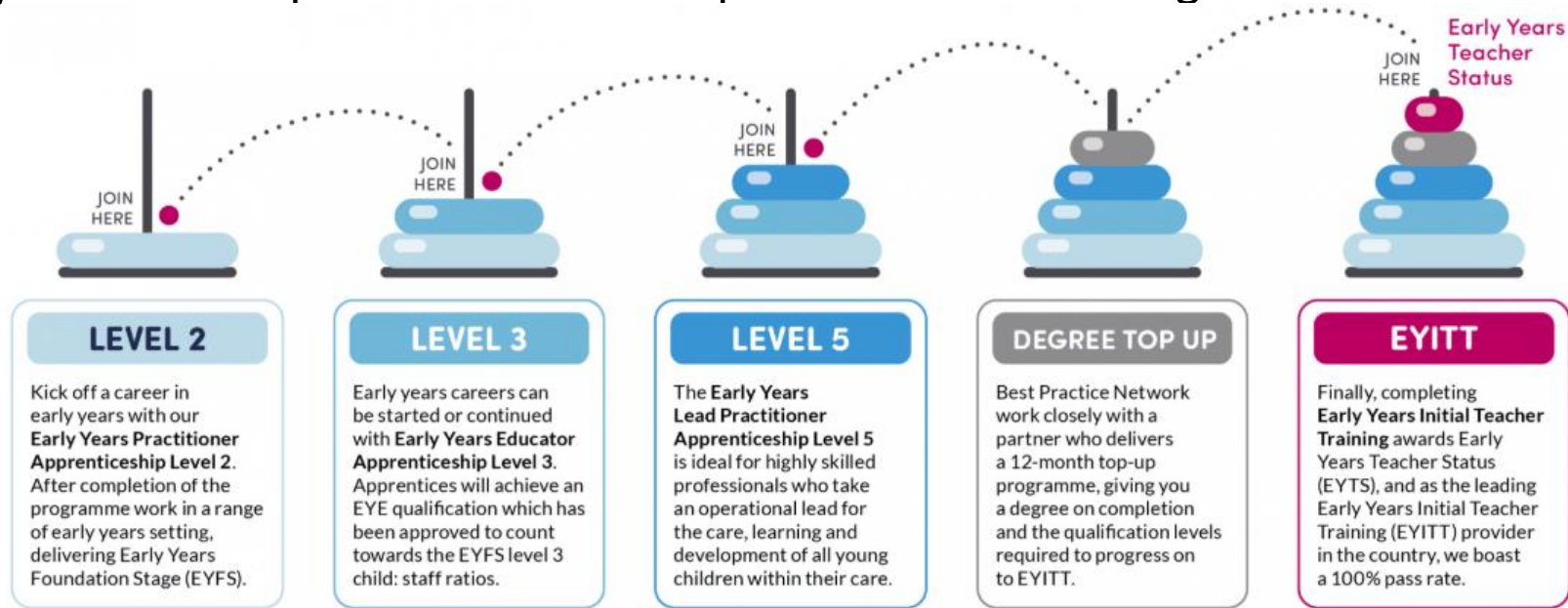
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Developing Future Leaders – Step by Step

At Best Practice Network, we're proud to provide a full professional journey that supports every stage of Early Years development — from new practitioners to strategic leaders.



Specialist or further progression:

Coaching in the Early Years Level 5, EYSENCO Level 3, and Early Years Senior Leader Apprenticeships Level 7



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Q&A

If you have any final questions, please pop them in the **Chatbox** or **Q&A panel** — our team is here to answer them before we close.

We'd love to hear your thoughts and make sure you leave with all the information you need.



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Thank you for joining
us today!

Applications close October 26.

Apply at

<https://www.bestpracticenet.co.uk/early-years-senior-leader>

[bestpracticenet.co.uk](https://www.bestpracticenet.co.uk)

Learn. Share. Grow.