

Ready to



START SCHOOL

A PRACTITIONER GUIDE

to help support children and
parents so that children are

...ready for school

...ready to learn

...ready to succeed



- There is a lot that can be done very early to prepare children to start school
- The Top Tips will give you some ideas for activities and how you can work in partnership with parents
- The case studies will give you further ideas about the Transition process

Ready to **START** SCHOOL

A guide to help you support
children and parents

In Peterborough we are
working together to ensure
that all children are ready to
start school.

We have already produced a Parent
Leaflet that gives useful information
about how parents and carers can help
their child at home.

This Practitioner Booklet is designed to
give staff working with young children
ideas for supporting children and
their parents so that all children have
the best chance of reaching their full
potential in school.

Research shows that if a child is ready to
start school it is likely that they will do
well in their whole education and get a
job that they enjoy.

Practitioners alongside parents/
carers are key people in a child's
development and learning. Making
some time to read and try the
tips in this booklet will really help
the children in your setting to like
learning, feel good about themselves
and be happy to start school.

The transition process into school is
more than just one event. There is so
much that practitioners and parents
can do in the year leading up to a child
starting school (and before) to ensure
that a child is ready to start school.



This booklet is divided into sections that
are based on the **START** Parent Leaflet



S

...shoes, socks and
put on clothes



T

...talk, listen, share
and follow instructions



A

...ask for help



R

...ready to try different
foods and tools



T

...toilet on their own



Each section has 2 pages with Top Tips,
case studies, the child's voice, some teacher
observations and some photographs to
provide ideas for supporting children's
transition into school. The middle 2 pages
of the booklet provide some activities that
parents can do at home.

This booklet has been developed by a variety
of partners working together including
teachers, practitioners from Peterborough
City Council, the Maintained and PVI sector,
Children's Centres, Health and Vivacity.

Feedback and examples of good practice from
the School Readiness Surveys that were sent to
the PVI sector and schools in 2016 and 2017
have been incorporated into the booklet.

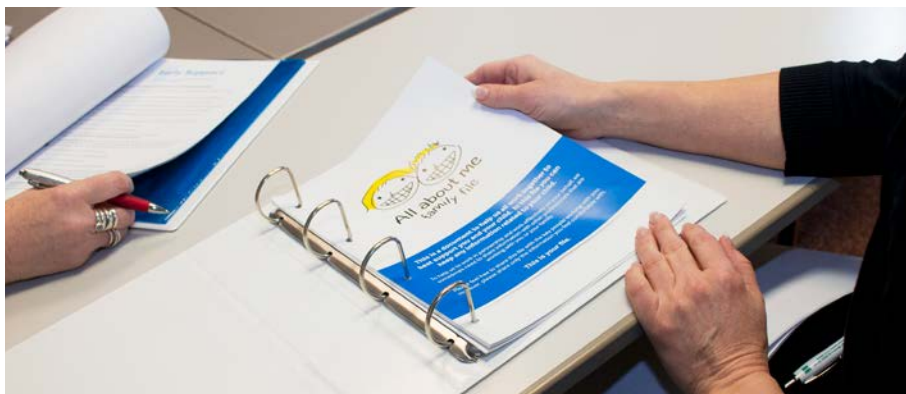
Building children's confidence enable
practitioners, professionals

For further information and

SEND

Practitioners need to think about children's specific needs so that every child has a smooth transition into school.

- ✓ Share as much information as possible about the child in the setting. This should include current targets and strategies which are working well.
- ✓ Make contact with the school as early as possible (once parents have accepted the school place) and begin to develop links. Invite schools to visit and attend any events e.g. teddy bears picnic, stay and play sessions, etc.
- ✓ Invite the school to attend SEN support target setting meetings and/or the annual review if a child has an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).



- ✓ Arrange visits with the child to the classroom/school. It may be helpful to go when the classroom is empty and quiet to start with. Think about the practical details - which door will the child enter through, where is their peg going to be?
- ✓ The class teacher/teaching assistant should arrange to visit the setting.
- ✓ The key person could model how to support the child e.g. using a workstation, key group times, objects of reference/visual symbols.
- ✓ Share the child's likes/dislikes and activities that work well.
- ✓ Arrange a transition meeting involving parents and professionals. This can take place in the early years setting or school. Think about where parents will be most confident to discuss their child. Please refer to the Early Years Team's guidelines for transition meetings for further information.
- ✓ At the transition meeting the school, family and early years setting should agree an admission and settling in plan. This should include whether the child is starting on a part time or full time basis and reflect the need for flexibility with gradual phasing in if necessary.
- ✓ Some schools will need to arrange for staff training to meet the child's medical needs before the child starts with them in the September.

Children with English as an Additional Language (EAL)

- ✓ Parents might need help to understand when children need to be legally in school.
- ✓ Parents might need help with the School Admissions process.
- ✓ Tell schools what languages are spoken at home and about any cultural traditions.
- ✓ Inform schools how competent the child is in English - understanding and spoken.
- ✓ Inform the schools if the child has delayed language in their home language.
- ✓ Encourage parents to speak with their child in their home language.
- ✓ Translate transition information, if possible.
- ✓ Use photographs when communicating to the parents and children.

es them to start school curious and ready to learn. Strong partnership working involving all
and parents and carers will enable children to have good transitions into school.

and other helpful facts visit www.peterborough.gov.uk/START



Shoes, socks and put on clothes

Supporting children to independently take off, hang-up and put on their coat helps a child to feel confident as soon as they enter school.



When children go to school there are often only 2 adults to 30 children so children need to be as independent as possible.

If a child can hang up their coat and put on their coat without adult support this saves a lot of time and allows teachers to concentrate on extending other aspects of learning. Children might still need support doing up buttons and zips but if their manipulative skills have been developed before starting school it is a lot easier for the child.

Plan daily activities such as sorting socks and shoes into pairs to support children finding their own socks and shoes. Model how to put socks on. Encourage parents to make more time at home before they leave the house so that their child can put on their own coat and shoes.

Child's voice



"...when I start school I will be with lots of other children. I need to be as independent as I can be. If I can get myself dressed, put my shoes on and take care of my things it will be easier for me to learn..."

Top Tips:

- ✓ Encourage parents to put names on clothes and shoes.
- ✓ Help children to recognise their own belongings.
- ✓ Talk to parents about the challenges of daily routines (for example, what it is like for a child managing their packed lunch, getting changed for PE, accessing the toilet by themselves).
- ✓ Show children how to hook a coat on a peg.
- ✓ Model putting on and taking off clothes.



- ✓ Encourage children to practise taking shoes and socks off, putting socks inside shoes.
- ✓ Discuss the right clothes for the weather (sunhats, gloves, coats, jumpers).

Case study

Transition into School: SEND Child

Alpha Fletton Nursery worked in close partnership with a school in Peterborough prior to and during the transition process of a child with SEND.

Prior to the child starting school the teachers visited the nursery and spoke to the Key Person. Staff from the Nursery and school met at a Transition meeting to discuss the child's needs, targets and the child's interests.

The Key Person from the Nursery accompanied the child and the parent on the 3x one hour settling-in sessions at the school. At these sessions the Nursery Practitioner supported the parent and child and met the child's 1:1 support in school and discussed details, such as the child's likes and dislikes, favourite songs and how to keep the child calm.




When the child started school the Key Person attended for the first few days to support the school practitioners and the child in the transition.

The Nursery Key Worker feels that the whole process was very much focused on the needs of the child and was really beneficial to everyone involved. The time commitment from the Nursery in releasing the Key Person for several sessions was worth it as the child's transition process was a positive experience for the child, family and school.

The school was able to see how the Nursery Key Person worked with the child and the child had a familiar face throughout the process.





Open ended questions

-  I wonder whose socks these are?
-  I wonder whether we need our coats on today?
-  How can you make it easier to put your coat on?

“...my Mum has bought name tags with a picture for my clothes!”



SEND

-  Think about how a child with SEND will come into school. Will this be with everybody and through the main door?
-  A child with SEND may need to arrive in the classroom earlier or wait until the rest of the children are in so that they have space and time e.g. to hang up their coat.

Teachers tell us...

The children really struggle to manage putting things in book bags and PE bags. Practising using these would really help them when they start school.





Talk, listen, share and follow instructions

Encourage parents to switch off technology for ten minutes each day to make time to listen and talk to their child.



Providing a calm environment indoors and outdoors with small communication friendly spaces supports children to listen and talk.

Ensure that every child has time each day where they are able to talk to a practitioner either 1:1 or in a small group. Talk to parents about switching off all technology for 10 minutes each day and making time to talk and listen to their child.

Organise workshops to explain to parents the importance of sharing a book together and playing games each day to prepare their child for school. Encourage the parents to visit and join their local library. Advertise the Rhyme Time activities at the Children's Centres and the libraries, if the children are not attending your setting full-time.

Child's voice



"...When I start school there are a lot of different things to do. Please help me to share and to be able to play a game with my friends..."

Top Tips:

- ✓ Provide daily opportunities for children to talk about their learning.
- ✓ Use small groups whenever possible.
- ✓ Play simple sorting and matching games with small groups of children.
- ✓ Use Phase One Letters and Sounds games and activities
- ✓ Introduce playground games outside e.g. What's the Time Mr Wolf, Grandma's Footsteps.
- ! **Singing rhymes helps children to listen and respond:** Have a selection of finger and action rhymes which you can use on a daily basis. Make sure parents know the actions, words and tune so that they can support at home too.
- ! **Finger rhymes and action rhymes are really useful** for children learning English as an additional language as they can join in with the actions and rhythm whilst learning the English words.

Open ended questions

- ? I wonder what will happen if.....
- ? How can we----? ? What happens if we---

Top Tips for Effective Talk

- ✓ Respond sensitively, show an interest and give time to respond: count to ten in your head and learn to feel comfortable with silence when waiting for the child's response.
- ✓ Observing and commenting: The five finger rule – practitioner allows themselves a ratio of four comments to one question during interactions with children.
- ✓ Questions: Use open-ended questions and avoid closed questions which require either a 'yes', 'no' or one word response.
- ✓ Expansions: add a little to the child's comment e.g. the child says "Dolly breakfast" and the adult might respond "Yes, Dolly is eating breakfast".
- ✓ Recasts: expanding or changing what the child says but maintaining most, or all, of his/her intended meaning e.g. "I drank all my milk" the adult might recast by responding "Yes, you drank all your milk".



SEND

- ✓ Inform the school what strategies are used to tell the child that it is time to move to another activity e.g. wiggling fingers, a bell, visual timetable.

Dogsthorpe Infants School

Getting our children ready to reach for the stars and DREAM, BELIEVE and SHINE!

We organised four sessions during August for our new children and their families to come into school so we could spend time getting to know each other. We worked in partnership with our nursery and pre-school settings to help us to connect with parents.

During the 1 hour session children accessed a range of activities with school staff and Governors whilst parents/carers enjoyed talks led by different professionals such as the School Nurse, our Communication Mentor and Parent Partnership Co-ordinator. The hall was organised into zones focusing on Communication and Literacy, EAD, Maths and Fine Motor Skills.

We started each session with a 'hello song' and ended with a story and our 'goodbye song'. Every week each child took home a book, thanks to the National Literacy Trust, which helped to embed our aim as a school to promote a love of reading with our children.

Across the four weeks, we met 31 of our new families which is a third of our cohort; we consider this to be a great success!

We feel that we have had a 'head start' with these families and the children who came to the sessions have settled quickly.

We have received extremely positive feedback from parents and they have given us ideas for how to develop the sessions next year!

Teachers tell us...

There can be a lot to remember in school and developing skills in following instructions will help the children to achieve tasks in school much more effectively.





Home learning ideas to help parents involve their children



Play with different **bags** to help your child become more skilled in using them. Get them to put items in and take them out. Practice opening and closing and how they would carry their bag.



Talk to your child about getting dressed to suit the **weather**. (Revisit at different times of the year). Don't forget hats, scarves and gloves, as well as how to apply suncream.



Get your child helping with hanging out and getting in **washing**. They can learn about matching pairs, folding, which things belong to who and discuss colours, patterns and sizes.



Follow simple **recipes** at home and share photos with the setting.



Play board games with your child to teach turn-taking, sharing, waiting and the ability to cope when they don't win.



Choose a subject, such as starting school and encourage your child to ask at the **library** for starting school books.



Make fun **challenges** on the way to and from the setting such as who can find the biggest leaf, counting cars and spotting letters and numbers.

Ready to
START SCHOOL

This section gives parents or carers a range of simple activities



www.paceyorg.uk/parents/toolkit
This toolkit provides a range of information and activities that will help you and your child to prepare for school.



www.talkingpoint.org.uk
Visit this website for information to help develop your child's speech, language and communication skills.



Children in activities to help them to be ready to **START** school



Plan a picnic (indoors or outdoors) and include all the tricky things from a packed lunch. Such as opening packets, peeling fruit and putting straws in drinks.



Play a game of **balancing** things on a tray and walking around the room.



Talk about using the toilet. Share a book from the library or your setting.



Let your child choose **underpants** to involve them in their own toileting journey from the beginning.



Visit a local shop and encourage your child to **ask for something** that you wish to buy.



Try to introduce new **food**. Talk about how it smells, looks, feels and tastes.



Practice, practice, practice **activities** that involve cutting, weaving, squeezing, threading or drawing to build muscles for writing.



Let your child put their **teddy** on it's own potty. This may help your child to talk about their worries around toilet training.

linked to the different aspects of **START** that they can do at home with their child.



www.vivacity-peterborough.com
Find out here about your local library, the museum and events happening across the city that you can enjoy with your child.



www.infantandtoddlerforum.org
Find practical advice and ideas to help develop healthy eating habits and guidance on portion sizes for children.



www.ihv.org.uk
Here you can find top tips on toilet training as well as many other early childhood matters.



Ask for help

Create an emotional environment where all practitioners truly value what every child says and does.



When starting school children often lack confidence to ask for help. Practitioners and teachers can develop children's confidence to ask for help by creating an emotional environment where adults show a real interest in what every child has to say.

Make time to listen to children and respond appropriately. Encourage children to help in the setting and model asking for help. For example, 'Please can you help me carry these books to the bookcase?' Ensure practitioners encourage children to ask for help, rather than just intervening.

Create daily opportunities for children to work in small groups where each child has the opportunity to talk and ask questions.

Child's voice



"...Starting school can be quite scary. Help me to become more confident to ask for help when I need it..."

Top Tips:

- ✓ Encourage children and let children know that it is okay to ask for help (set a positive example).
- ✓ Make role play meaningful and relevant e.g. Shops with adults modelling asking for help.
- ✓ Model how to ask for help using a full sentence e.g. 'Please can you help me to...'
- ✓ Encourage children to ask questions about stories or when using open ended resources.
- ✓ Time to talk and time to do.

Asking for resources

- ✓ Rotate books and other resources so that everything isn't out at once. It's good to encourage children to sometimes ask for what they want.
- ✓ Create a selection of photos of resources which are stored away so that children can choose from them and ask for what they want.

Visit the library

- ✓ Take children and parents on a visit to join the library. Encourage them to ask for help finding the books they want.

Case study

Spurgeons' Children's Centres

Ready Steady School Parent/Child Workshops were organised at Spurgeons' Children's Centres during the summer holidays prior to children starting school.

These gave parents opportunities to talk about things that were worrying them about their child starting school.

The practitioners used the START Parent leaflet to show the parents what they could be doing at home to support their children.

Practitioners discussed with parents and carers the importance of routines such as bedtime routines.

They recommended

- ✓ Ensure parents introduce regular bedtime routines.
- ✓ Turn off technology at least one hour before bedtime as the blue light and content can be overstimulating for children at bedtimes.
- ✓ Settle children with a bath and a bedtime story.

A variety of activities were organised that included dressing-up games, mark making activities and singing rhymes.

The practitioners chose a different story each week that linked with starting school e.g. My First School Day and Gus Starts School.

The practitioners modelled how to share a story by talking about the pictures, encouraging the children to talk about the story and talking with the children about feelings.



Additional information

- ✓ Children might need help when:
 - ...putting letters in book bags to go home.
 - ...using the toilet.
 - ...doing up buttons and zips.
 - ...opening lunch boxes and PE bags.
- ✓ Some children might benefit from having a selection of pictures to show you to help them communicate.
- ✓ Teach children the core words.
- ✓ Model and recast sentences.
- ✓ Learn key words in the languages that your children speak.
- ✓ Ask parents of children with EAL to teach you key words in their language.

Open ended questions

- ? Why do you think it's easier to sit down to put your shoes on?
- ? What help would you like?
- ? Where are you going to put your shoes?

SEND

- ✓ Find out how the child communicates. Ensure appropriate visuals are ready to use from the first day and that all staff are confident to support the child with them.



Teachers tell us...

Children who are confident to ask questions about things that they don't understand will learn at a more rapid rate.





Ready to try different foods and tools

Being able to use a knife, fork and spoon gives children confidence to eat their school lunch.



Encourage all children to independently pour their drink and cut up their fruit at snack time. Provide a range of different snacks to encourage the children to try new foods.

Talk to parents about the importance of ensuring that their child can use a knife, fork and spoon before starting school so that their child can confidently eat their school lunch.

Provide children with a range of opportunities to develop their fine motor skills indoors and outdoors and ensure that children access these on a daily basis.

Talk to parents about the activities that they can do at home. Organise a workshop where you can set up a range of activities that could be available at home and give parents the recipe for playdough.

Child's voice



"...Help me to strengthen the muscles in my hands so that writing becomes easier and doesn't make my hands tired..."

Top Tips:

- ✓ Explain the importance of getting messy and being 'willing to have a go' at new or more challenging things.
- ✓ In the summer term, try carrying trays, opening/closing packets and lunchboxes.
- ✓ Talk about what to eat first when eating meals.
- ✓ Try to pour own drinks

Activities to develop fine motor skills

- ✓ Picking up objects with tweezers
- ✓ Snipping pieces of paper with scissors
- ✓ Sorting small objects
- ✓ Using pegs
- ✓ Small world and construction
- ✓ Playdough and gloop
- ✓ Peeling carrots
- ✓ Cutting up fruit
- ✓ Whittling a stick
- ✓ Weaving
- ✓ Finger rhymes
- ✓ Making patterns on pegboards
- ✓ Finger printing
- ✓ Mark making using chalks, paint brushes, sticks, pencils, etc



Case study

Handa's Surprise Parent/ Child Workshops

St Thomas More RC Primary School worked with Barnado's Children's Centre (East), Vivacity and St Thomas More Nursery to organise 5 sessions for parents and children prior to the children starting school.

A series of activities were planned for each of the sessions based around the story Handa's Surprise to support all areas of the curriculum.

Activities included:

- Using chalk pastels to draw the fruit
- Painting pictures of the animals
- Making the animals using playdough
- Cutting up fruit , making a fruit salad and eating it with a spoon and fork
- Balancing objects on their heads and doing an obstacle course
- Sequencing pictures from the story
- Matching the fruit to the animals

Each session began the same way; reading the story and encouraging the children and parents to join in. Parents gained confidence to talk about their concerns or worries about their children starting school in September.

The children and parents were initially shy and a little reluctant to join in the activities but by the final session the children and parents were confident in accessing the resources and engaging with the story. Parents and children were given a bag with the story book and resources that they have continued to use at home, donated by the National Literacy Trust.

Data at the end of the Reception year indicated that children involved in these groups were making more rapid progress than children with a similar ability who did not take part. Also, the parents involved in the project have good involvement with the school.



Additional information

- ✓ Introduce fruit and vegetables from around the world, especially from the countries that your children might originate from
- ✓ Set up activities that enable children to learn how to use a knife and fork e.g. making sandwiches
- ✓ Have knives, forks and spoons in the Home Corner



Open ended questions

- ? What do you like to eat?
- ? What is your favourite lunch?
- ? Which is your favourite finger rhyme?

SEND

- ✓ Ensure that all adults supporting the child are aware of the child's needs and how to support them e.g. Midday Supervisors.
- ✓ Ensure there is continuity for the child by having familiar activities available. Discuss these with the child's Key Person.



Teachers tell us...

Many children struggle to use their knife and fork, as well as utensils such as scissors. Providing as many opportunities as you can to use a variety of utensils will help them to improve their mark making skills





Toilet on their own

Children should be independently using the toilet before they start school unless they have a developmental delay or medical issue.



Practitioners need to encourage parents to work in partnership with them with toileting. If there are any difficulties suggest that the parent contacts their Health Visitor.

Encourage parents to show children how to independently use the toilet. Show children how to wash and dry their hands.

Practitioners need to encourage parents to discuss with the teachers in school if their child is not yet independently using the toilet.

This is because the general expectation is that children can independently go to the toilet when they start school, unless there is a medical issue or developmental delay.

Child's voice

"...Help me learn to go to the toilet, flush the toilet, wash my hands with soap and dry them myself, so I don't worry about going to the toilet and get in a muddle.'..."

Top Tips:

- ✓ Start conversations with parents early on.
- ✓ Work together (parents might feel anxious, embarrassed or lack confidence to discuss with you or to start the process).
- ✓ Share the handwashing song.
- ✓ Loose, elasticated waists when toilet training.

Open ended questions

- ? What do we do after going to the toilet?
- ? How do we wash our hands?
- ? Why do we wash our hands before eating?



Case study

Planning Transitions Term by Term

Hampton Vale Primary School plan their transition process over the year. Are there some aspects that you could introduce into your setting's transition process?

Autumn Term

- Create posters advertising Parent Meeting for following September intake.
- Publicise event in local area.
- Host parent meeting and presentation and complete tour of school during school hours in November.
- Publish powerpoint presentation on school website.
- July transition dates made available to parents and published on school website.
- September start dates and part time provision made available to parents and published on school website.
- START School Readiness programme promoted.

Spring Term

- Send initial welcome letter to all parents who have been offered a place which advises parents of transition events and dates.
- Send letter to parents who have accepted their offered place. Parents to respond with their child's current pre-school/nursery/childminder settings and respond to the events they will be attending in the summer term.
- Advise parents that a crèche is available for children during parent meeting.

Summer Term

- Reception teachers attend Transition to School Meeting to liaise with Early Years' settings.
- Staff attend Team Around the Child meetings.
- Transition Week : Various visits by staff to settings, parent information meetings, stay and play sessions for children, including a Saturday session.

New Autumn Term

- Home visits for all 90 children.
- Children start school: Phased over 3 days.



Additional information

- ✓ Refer parents to the Health Visitors' Toilet Training advice sheet.
- ✓ Show the children photographs of the toilet areas in the different schools that they will be attending.
- ✓ Talk about the similarities and the differences.
- ✓ Remind parents to show their child the toilet area when they visit the school.
- ✓ In school, practitioners should make time to show the children the toilets and talk with the children where to wash and dry their hands.
- ✓ Teach children the routine of washing and drying hands in each setting.
- ✓ Children might need to be shown how to turn on and off the taps.
- ✓ Practitioners need to be aware that some children find the driers very noisy and this can cause anxiety.

SEND

- ✓ Consider if any specialist equipment is needed. This may take time to arrange so the earlier sharing information can begin between the setting and school this will ensure everything is in place prior to the child starting school.



Teachers tell us...

Having as many children as possible independently using the toilet and able to wash and dry their hands enables us to concentrate on other aspects within the prime areas of learning.

Signpost to services

Some useful and helpful contacts

NHS Choices

Information and contact details for health and additional support on topics such as:

potty training, healthy eating, common childhood illnesses, common sleep problems in children and childhood allergies

www.nhs.uk

Barnardo's

Find your local Children's Centre where there are play sessions, as well as family support

www.barnardos.org.uk/childrenscentres/cc-search

Bookstart

Find information about books: Look at the online activities to support reading and writing

www.bookstart.org.uk

Spurgeons

Find your local Children's Centre where there are play sessions, as well as family support

www.spurgeons.org

Nursery World

Latest Early Years information

www.nurseryworld.co.uk

Peterborough City Council Admissions

All the information you need to register your child for a school place in Peterborough

www.peterborough.gov.uk/residents/schools-and-education/school-admissions

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust

Find local information on who to contact for health and well-being services

www.cpft.nhs.uk

National Literacy Trust

For more information about the Peterborough Literacy Campaign and how to get involved

www.literacytrust.org.uk/peterborough

Peterborough Early Years

Information about free two year old funding and other information linked to Early Years and Childcare

www.early-years.org and
www.facebook.com/PeterboroughEarlyYears

SEND

Find a range of services that the council provides to support you and your child

www.nasen.org.uk/early-years-send-resources

Vivacity

Find your local library running story and rhyme time sessions

www.vivacity-peterborough.com

Institute for Health Visiting

This website provides Top Tips for Parents on toilet training, child development, sleep, etc

www.ihv.org.uk

Foundation Years

This provides practitioners with up to date information and archived publications

www.foundationyears.org.uk

Pacey

Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years

www.pacey.org.uk

Early Excellence

For information on training, resources and updates

www.earlyexcellence.com/go-shopping



Visit www.peterborough.gov.uk/START or call 01733 747474

