

# Languages of training

Often, when we talk about 'training' and our needs, we tend to focus on what we call 'professional' progression, which is, of course, vitally important, but we should not neglect personal development.



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**O**N A recent consultancy visit, I asked an educator about their professional development. They responded by saying that they had not attended any training in the last year. I was, of course, surprised to hear this. When I reframed my question and used the term 'training', she said: 'Ah, yes, I attended a course within my local authority recently!'

The reason I started with this anecdote is that many educators do not recognise the term 'professional development' or the term 'continuous personal and professional development' (CPPD) and how this supports them in their day-to-day work with children.

I include the term 'personal' because educators need to work on their personal as well as their professional development, which are two different things.

**Personal development:** This relates to the development of 'self', holistically: Enhancing unique skills; building on unique talents; and developing self-awareness in a variety of ways.

**Professional development:** This relates to the individual and directly links to professional progression and qualifications, as well as short courses, instigated personally or by a line manager.

Although personal and professional development are different, when going through the continuous development process they can be intertwined. For example, an educator attending a course on 'outdoor learning', linked to a setting's development plan on outdoor learning for children, might also gain confidence in speaking within a large group situation.

As we know, government cuts have had a huge impact on local authority (LA) budgets and the range of training that educators have become accustomed to has been reduced. Some LAs are putting on minimum training, some LA training is only linked to legislation and some training requires a full course fee or a small charge.

Independent training, sourced privately, also has a cost, whether it is an external course or conference, or in-house training delivered by a trainer.

Many educators are commenting that they have not been on any training, for the above reasons, and

that sourcing independent training is expensive, or that it is not on at a time that suits them and does not relate to their own continuous personal and professional development.

Whichever way we look at this, training is not as it was. It is, therefore, time that we started to think creatively on how we can support educators with their continuous personal and professional development. It is helpful if we change our thinking on training and view it as only a small element within our development and become more solution-focused in order to support each other in our support of children and their families.

So, what activities and experiences, other than training link to continuous personal and professional development?

**Professional sector journals:** Reading informative journals, such as **eye**, will keep you abreast of information within the sector and provide useful tips for practice.

**Visiting settings:** One can gain so much from visiting a setting and I always encourage delegates to swap telephone numbers when I am training. It is important to visit a range of settings, for example, if you are a school then visit a childminder, and vice versa.

You can keep a professional log of visits and note what you have seen linked to the *Early Years Foundation Stage* and the three characteristics of effective teaching and learning. Is there anything that you are in awe of? Is there anything that you feel professionally does not work? Is there any element of the practice that you might bring back and adapt in your setting?

**Social media:** There are many aspects to social media and you need to choose what is right for you and your own continuous personal and professional development. If you have a smart phone or tablet, or you can set up various social media 'apps'.

**Facebook:** Various groups and individuals are sharing valuable information and connecting at [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)

**Blogs:** Many colleagues are now blogging, sharing useful information about their practice and their

views on early years, as well as related topics, such as politics and valuable sector news.

**Pinterest:** Pinterest is where colleagues 'pin' items of interest. These tend to be more images of their practice, which is a great way to view images within a setting – [www.pinterest.com](http://www.pinterest.com)

**Instagram:** Is similar to Pinterest, where colleagues can upload photographs and videos – [www.instagram.com](http://www.instagram.com)

**LinkedIn:** This includes a number of professional organisations and groups documenting sector information and having pedagogy conversations – [www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com)

**Forums:** Online forums, normally set up via organisations, can be useful. Most are free, although for a few there is a charge. They are usually theme-led with questions and conversations started by members.

**Twitter:** Twitter is a way of sharing news and stories as it happens. There is a popular weekly chat called @EYTalking, hosted by National Early Years Trainers and Consultants (NEYTCO). Experts regularly guest host this event, including the Childcare Minister. If colleagues have a query, they use the hash tag #EYTalking and many share ideas, including colleagues overseas – [www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com)

Note: your confidentiality and social media policy should include all elements of social media, and you should ensure that staff and parents are fully aware of its contents. Cross reference to Data Protection and Freedom of Information legislation.

If you have yet to try social media, there are many ways to get started just by using a search engine. Type in 'How to...?' And a number of pages of information will come up. In addition, if you need to see the information visually, type the same 'How to use...?' into YouTube – [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)

#### Meetings:

- *Group/class meetings within your setting:* Use these as mini-training sessions to focus on a particular theme or policy.
- *External meetings:* This could include attending forums, organisation events and cluster meetings. These are a way to share and connect face-to-face with other like-minded professionals.

**Induction:** Make good use of the induction period to begin to support staff with their continuous personal and professional development in all areas.

**Annual core training:** As part of a setting's training plan, managers should list which continuous personal and professional development they need their staff to re-visit, such as safeguarding or child development.

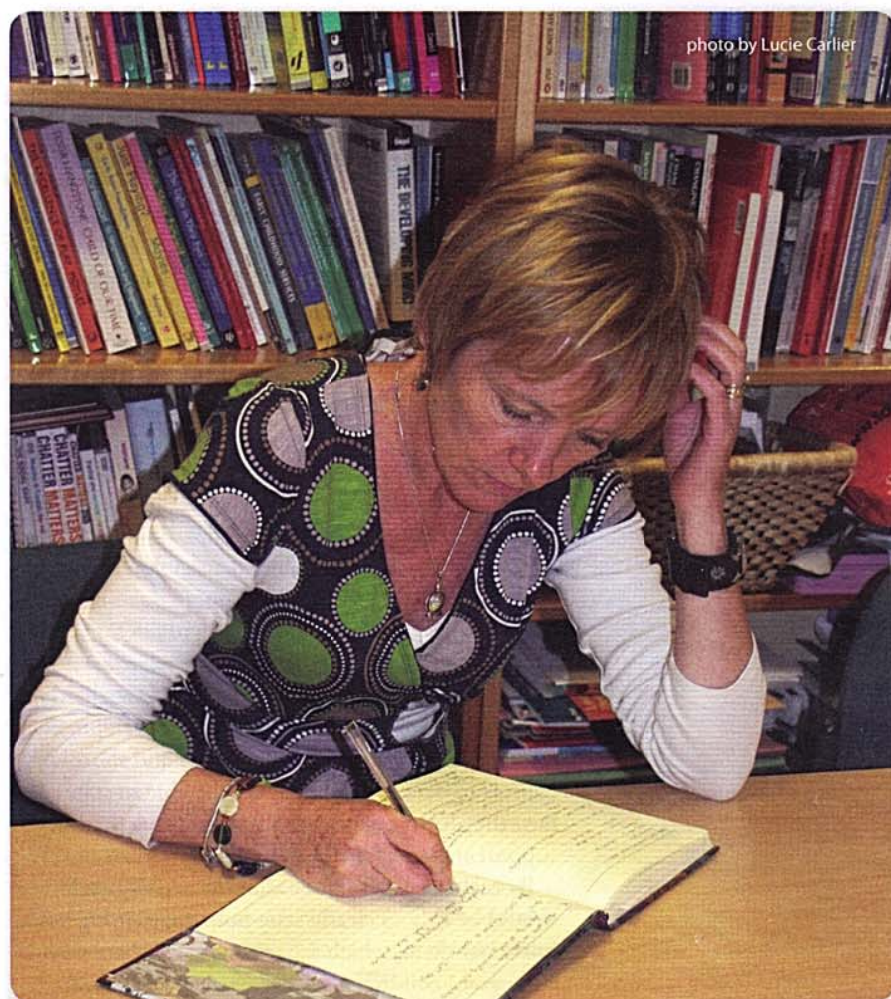


photo by Lucie Carlier

*Practitioners should be aware of the many development routes available to them*

**Termly focus:** The focus may have come from an observation or from a moderation of children's learning and development that may have picked up that children are below in a particular area of development. The setting should use a range of continuous personal and professional development to support staff with their knowledge in this area, in order that children can make better progress.

**Peer-to-peer support:** If done correctly, peer-to-peer support can have a huge impact on shifting practice positively. It is important to remember that it is less about the educator and more about professional pedagogical conversations.

**Mentoring:** It is helpful to give staff detailed support if they need it via specific mentoring.

**One-on-one supervision:** As well as being a legal requirement, supervision is extremely useful to discuss and explore staff development needs during private one-on-one sessions.

**Coaching:** This is a useful way of 'showing' and 'guiding' staff who may need help with their conduct or capability.

**CPPD corner:** It is a good idea to dedicate a corner in your setting to continuous personal and professional development, with text books, journals and social media information for staff. See case study for further information.

**Online training:** Many educators are now using online training, including webinars, to support their continuous personal and professional development. There are many short courses provided by individuals and companies. Face-to-face training is still very useful and can take a variety of forms, from inset days, twilight, evening and weekend training.

**Sharing a trainer:** Many settings are now coming together to split the costs of a trainer and venue hire, which works out as cost-effective for all involved. Many trainers should be able to assist you with this, if not, contact NEYTCO for support.

### Getting started

Every member of staff should have a personalised continuous personal and professional development folder, which lists their qualifications and short courses to date. Staff should also be able to state how they learn best. Record future events that may support them in their practice.

By including reflections after the activity, staff should be able to clearly state how the training has impacted them, which aspects they will share with colleagues, children and parents, any adaptations to their setting and how it will influence children's learning and development. More importantly, where is the evidence of this? Should this evidence be recorded or can staff confidently verbalise this to their colleagues and external stakeholders, such as the LA or Ofsted, if need be?

### Setting a professional development plan

Every setting, irrespective of size, should have a development plan, linked either to a business plan, Self-Evaluation Form and/or a quality improvement scheme. Carrying out a rigorous audit of continuous personal and professional development is helpful and brings value to the setting, irrespective of its size or the numbers of staff members employed.

It is also advisable to inform parents about your setting's continuous personal and professional development activities and why this is important in supporting their children's care, learning and

development, particularly if you close for training and/or are considering closing in the future.

How about a joint session with parents and staff? This is a proactive way of supporting learning within the home environment and, in addition, gives parents a clear understanding of what we do within early years and why.

Remember, it is not about the quantity of professional development but the quality and, more importantly, the impact on the educator, on their practice and setting, and how they use it to support every child.

### Case study

**Cassie Holland, deputy manager at Archfield House Nursery, Bristol**

'After going into work and telling people about the new articles I had read and the professional discussions I was having on Twitter and being constantly met with "I really need to get on Twitter!", I created our Continuous Professional Development (CPD) corner in our staff room. I hoped to introduce, help or encourage all our staff members to get involved with the daily learning and development opportunities in a variety of ways.

'We are already incredibly lucky (as a private nursery) to close our doors twice a year for in-service days, but I felt that we were missing out on many possibilities, focusing our CPD solely on training courses. I collected a small selection of our early years books that had been dotted around as well as our early years magazines to ensure staff knew they counted as professional development.

'As soon as the corner was created it sparked conversations between staff! They began discussing who had Twitter already and who could help to create an account. The more ICT-able members of staff answered questions about what "pinning" (Pinterest) meant and what an @ was used for.

'Staff members approached me separately to tell me their findings from the evening before – many commented on how they didn't realise so much was going on that they didn't know about.

'Our CPD corner has developed since the early days, it now has dates of all our staff training that we can send our questions along to trainers! We have created shared boards on Pinterest for all of us to add to, staff members have collected their Twitter names together and people have bought in their own books to add to the collection. The corner has not only benefited our staff members' personal development, but that of our team!'

eye

## Key points

- We should not neglect our personal development when planning training needs and qualification paths
- There are many avenues open for training and development and raising staff awareness about what each avenue offers can help drive both personal and professional development

### Useful resources

- Training and development support – [www.neytco.co.uk](http://www.neytco.co.uk) – for CPD-related information, including a list of settings who welcome visitors
- Freedom of Information – [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk)
- Data Protection – [www.gov.uk/data-protection/the-data-protection-act](http://www.gov.uk/data-protection/the-data-protection-act)