

Southampton Healthy Early Years Award

Undertaking the Healthy Early Years Award offers a unique opportunity for early years and childcare settings to work towards a quality assured programme, helping to improve the health and wellbeing for under 5s and their families.

Helping families to make healthier choices remains a national focus. In Southampton, obesity rates are similar to the England average, and these levels are unacceptably high. Therefore, addressing obesity, through healthier nutrition and physical activity choices, in addition to improving oral health, is a priority for the city.

Participating in the award helps providers to provide a healthier environment for children in their care. It helps families to make positive choices and provides practical support for early year's practitioners. Completing the award provides clear and consistent messages to parents /carers and children on healthy eating, oral health and physical activity to benefit the home environment.

Southampton's HEYA was originally developed in 2009, and in 2017 was redesigned and piloted to make it more accessible and practical to achieve. There are six stand-alone awards at three progressive levels: Bronze, Silver and Gold.

The award, which is offered free of charge to early years and childcare providers, is coordinated by the Early Years and Childcare team, with oversight from Public Health.

Since the award was revised in 2017 thirty nurseries and preschools, and eight childminders have achieved a bronze award. In this period three settings have achieved a silver award in Healthy Eating, five settings in Physical Activity, and eight settings have achieved the silver Healthy Mouths' award. One early year's provider completed their Gold award in December 2019.

Comments from providers who have completed an award include: "*Really positive feedback from parents and (we've) seen a real change in the content of the children's lunchboxes.*"

'It's made all the staff reflect on what they do with the children', 'children really enjoy the wake- and- shake activities'

And "we really enjoyed completing the bronze healthy eating award and have noticed a positive impact on the setting in regards to food being offered and provided from home."

A film was produced in autumn 2019 to help people to find out more about the award https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RcW_QMmUksQ .

Outdoor play project

In addition, practitioners and leaders from ten early years' settings have taken part in an Explore the Outdoors play project, working alongside a SCC Play Development Coordinator and an Outdoor Play worker, to explore what is currently being provided in early years, what is working well and what support practitioners would like to further develop their outdoor learning environment. Sessions were held at Green Lane Copse, on Weston Shore and at YMCA Fairthorne, as the participants explored opportunities, including using fire, wood and water, to extend the children's outdoor experiences and to encourage more active play.