



Helping Early Years Practitioners Apply Research to Teaching and Learning by:

- Building on and strengthening local networks of early years educators to share knowledge and effective practice.
- Proactively sharing information and advice on evidence-based approaches – for example, through newsletters, blogs and social media.
- Acting as a point of contact for bespoke advice and signposting to other funded support.
- Working with the EFF to select evidence-based programmes to fund and make available to nurseries and childminders.

Meet the Team Behind HEART

Meet the dedicated partners working together to support high-quality early years practice across the West Midlands and beyond; *Sally Davies, Michelle Howles, Claire Fitzgerald and Lesley Harris.*

Sally Davies

Hub Lead

Bloomsbury & Goodway Maintained Nursery Schools

About Sally



“I am privileged to serve as the Executive Headteacher across two Local Authority-maintained nursery schools in Birmingham; Bloomsbury & Goodway. I am able to do my job because of the wonderful teams that I work with in both schools.”

As a partner of the Heart Midlands Early Years Stronger Practice Hub, I have valued the opportunity to connect, collaborate and work in partnership with colleagues from across the West Midlands and beyond.

I strongly believe in the power of networking and the importance of sharing best practice to support continuous improvement in early years education.

I am passionate about ensuring equity for all and I am committed to a trauma-informed, nurture-based approach to practice.

Michelle Howles

Hub Partner

Norton Hall Children & Family Centre

About Michelle



Throughout my career, I have remained committed to continuous learning, sector leadership and building strong, meaningful relationships that make a positive difference to children's lives. I began my career as a nursery practitioner, progressing to deputy and manager roles before becoming a Children's Centre Manager, leading multi-agency teams, family support services and early intervention work. I now manage a charity-run nursery, where my leadership is rooted in nurture principles, emotionally safe practice and the power of relationships.

I am passionate about stories, songs and rhymes, and about creating language-rich experiences that support children's learning and wellbeing. Building strong partnerships with parents and empowering practitioners are central to my work. I am committed to inclusion, safeguarding and high-quality early education, ensuring every child feels a sense of belonging and has the strongest possible foundation for lifelong learning.

Claire Fitzgerald

Hub Partner

LMC Childcare Solutions

About Claire



“ I am an Early Years leader based in Birmingham, with over 20 years’ experience working across the sector. I run a successful childminding provision with a dedicated team of staff, alongside working as a Partner and EYSPA Lead for the HEART Midlands Early Years Stronger Practice Hub. ”

Through this role, I support practitioners and childminders across the region through networking, professional development, and evidence-informed practice.

I am passionate about championing the childminding sector, promoting equity for all children, and strengthening high-quality early years practice across the wider sector

Lesley Harris

Hub Partner

Weoley Castle Maintained Nursery School

About Lesley



“My name is Lesley and I am delighted to be able to share a little bit about me to introduce myself to you all. I am currently a partner in HEART Stronger Practice Hub and Head Teacher at Weoley Castle Nursery School, Preschool & Early Learning Hub in South Birmingham.”

I have been incredibly fortunate to have been involved in some amazing initiatives during my career and these have shaped my practice and helped me grow as a practitioner and a leader.

I am a Trainer of Trainers for the High Scope Approach and the Glasgow Nurture Principles. We have developed Weoley Castle as a nurture school and have undertaken in depth research to guide our Ordinarily Available Provision. We have been accredited as a TIAAS Gold school. Happy to share and support others.

Together our early years community is stronger. By sharing expertise, supporting professional development and working collaboratively across the region, we can help build a stronger early years sector and improve outcomes for all children.

We look forward to connecting with you and your setting. Visit the [Events](#) page on our website to explore our upcoming professional development opportunities, training and networking events.

