

Early Years Conversation Project Evaluation Study

Information Sheet for Settings

As part of the Department for Education's (DfE) Early Years Recovery Programme, A Brighter Start Stronger Practice Hub and the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) are working together to fund early years settings with access to the Early Years Conversation Project (EYCP), an evidence-informed professional development programme. An evaluation team from the University of Durham has been appointed to evaluate the impact of EYCP on how early years professionals support young children's communication and language development. The EYCP is designed and delivered by East London Research School.

We are looking for 70 early years settings that:

- ❖ Are a Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) nursery or a state funded school-based nursery offering provision for 2-year-olds
- ❖ Are located in the following London boroughs (Barking and Dagenham, Barnet, Brent, Camden, City of London, Enfield, Greenwich, Hackney, Haringey, Havering, Islington, Kensington and Chelsea, Kingston and Richmond, Merton, Newham, Redbridge, Sutton, Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest, Wandsworth, Westminster).
- ❖ Have a minimum of 8 children aged 2–years-old at the start of September 2024, who will attend the setting for a minimum of 15 hours a week during the 2024-2025 school year.
- ❖ Will be able to commit to releasing one practitioner who works directly with 2-3-year-olds as the 'EYCP Champion' to attend training sessions throughout the academic year.
- ❖ Will be able to commit to releasing the setting manager or the Early Years Foundation Stage lead for 3 training sessions, in addition to supporting the 'EYCP Champion' throughout the project.
- ❖ Have not participated in Manor Park Talks, Newham Communication Project or Camden Kids Talk.
- ❖ Are not taking part in the DfE Early Years Professional Development Programme or any other Early Years trials funded by the EEF or similar funder.

What is it?

The EYCP is an eight-month programme, focused on evidence-informed professional development (PD). It has been designed to improve early years professionals' understanding and practice in supporting children's communication and language development.

The EYCP is based on a strong body of research evidence that consistently shows that communication and language approaches benefit young children's learning. Early language ability is one of the strongest predictors of later development through school and in life. Language is essential for thinking, social and emotional wellbeing and learning in all areas of development.

What are the benefits for my setting?

- ❖ By taking part in this evaluation study, your setting is adding to the evidence base and knowledge on what works in early years education in England.
- ❖ Your setting will receive a promising approach that aims to improve children's communication and language development.

- ❖ There are financial incentives for participating (£150 at the start of the project and £250 at the end) and 50% of cover costs for staff attendance at training.
- ❖ You will receive the EYCP training for FREE.

What does the Early Years Conversation Project involve?

Early years professionals will receive training to understand and use a set of specific evidence-informed strategies (*ShREC: **S**hare attention, **R**espond, **E**xpand and **C**onversation, and **I**nteractive book reading*) to promote high-quality multi-turn conversations with all children. They will receive 'wrap-around support' from an experienced mentor to enable them to implement and embed these strategies in everyday practice.

Settings will either receive the EYCP training in the academic year 2024/25 or 2025/26. It will be delivered by experienced early years teachers Fliss James and Melissa Prendergast from the East London Research School.

Participants will receive:

- ❖ **Professional development** through a mix of face to face and virtual training. This will involve 1.5 days face to face and 6 hour long pre-recorded modules. The 'EYCP Champion' (room leader or nursery teacher working directly with children aged 2 to 3 years old) will receive all the training. The setting manager or EYFS leader will join them for specific sessions.
- ❖ **Specialist mentoring** through a mix of face-to-face and virtual 'hub' meetings. Mentors will run 9 hub meetings across the year with a minimum of 5 support visits from mentors. At the beginning and end of the programme an ITERS-3 ([Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale](#)) observation of the setting's environment is completed by the mentor to provide formative feedback on progress towards providing a language-rich environment. Hub meetings will be used to build knowledge, revisit learning from the online modules and embed understanding. Mentors will use video to help participants tune in to what the strategies look like, how successfully they use them and the impact on the children. These meetings will provide needs-based support for the 'EYCP Champion' to implement the strategies, overcome barriers, and cascade strategies to their wider team.
- ❖ **Access to a dedicated online knowledgebase.** The EYCP online platform will extend PD learning by providing video exemplification, background materials, and information and ideas to support families at home.

What does taking part in the EYCP evaluation study involve?

As part of the evaluation study, 35 settings will be chosen at random to receive the EYCP programme starting in November 2024. The other 35 will continue practice as normal and form the waitlist-control group to receive the EYCP programme the following year. Choosing settings at random will allow the evaluation team to assume that there are no prior differences between settings that could affect the primary outcome, and any effect is due to EYCP being received by the settings chosen. You will find out which group your setting has been allocated to in October/November 2024, after assessments are completed.

Regardless of whether your setting is randomly allocated to use the EYCP programme in 2024/25 or the following year, we would like you to complete the activities listed below.

- ❖ Provide the number of children within your setting who are eligible for the evaluation study (that is, children aged 2-years old at the start of September 2024, attending nursery class for at least 15 hours a week)

- ❖ Hand-out information sheets and consent forms (paper and/or online forms) to parents/carers of all eligible children and collect completed consent forms. *Parents/carers can withdraw their consent if they change their mind during the evaluation study, without telling the reasons.*
- ❖ Support research assistants from the evaluation team to complete two language assessments with the eligible children (in a quiet environment or space in your setting) in September/October 2024 and in June/July 2025.
- ❖ Relevant practitioners (the setting manager and 'EYCP champion') will be asked to complete two short surveys: one in September/October 2024, and one in June/July 2025. They may also be asked to participate in one or two interviews/focus groups during the evaluation study between Nov 2024 and July 2025 (separate consent would be sought for interviews/focus groups).
- ❖ For eligible children whose parents/carers have provided consent, we will ask you to share children's personal information, including: forename; surname; date of birth; sex; address, postcode; if English is an Additional Language; eligibility for/receipt of government funded childcare at 2 years of age; Early Years Pupil Premium status (if applicable); nursery attendance pattern; and new nursery destination (if they move during the evaluation study, before June 2025).

No research activities other than receiving the EYCP training will occur in the academic year 2025/26 as a result of the EYCP evaluation study if your setting is in the waitlist-control group.

Data Protection

All information relating to relevant children, staff and your setting in this evaluation study will be treated in the strictest confidence and processed in accordance with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

Information provided for this study will be shared securely with the evaluation team at Durham University who is the data controller in this evaluation study. The evaluation team will write a report at the end of the evaluation study, to be published by the EEF. They will not mention your nursery, relevant staff or children's name in any report or publication coming from the research. Anonymous data may be kept indefinitely by the evaluation team and potentially shared with other research teams. The lawful basis for processing data would be 'Public Task'.

The attached EYCP evaluation study privacy notice for setting practitioners [last updated 29th Jan 2024] describes in detail how we will collect, store, process and share setting data as part of this evaluation study.

At the end of the evaluation study, data will be submitted to the EEF's data archive. At this point, the EEF and its archive manager (FFT Education) are responsible for controlling and processing the evaluation study data.

For the purposes of research and archiving, the evaluation study data will be linked with information about the children from the National Pupil Database (NPD) and shared with the Department for Education, the EEF, the EEF's archive manager, the Office for National Statistics and potentially other research teams.

The attached EYCP evaluation study privacy notice for parents/carers [last updated 29th Jan 2024] describes in detail how children's data will be collected, stored, processed, and shared as part of this evaluation study.

Safeguarding

All members of the delivery team and evaluation team visiting the school will ensure they are familiar with the school's safeguarding procedures and have received appropriate training on safeguarding protocols. In the event of a safeguarding incident they will submit an anonymized safeguarding incident report to EEF covering any safeguarding concerns that have come up during the course of programme or evaluation delivery.

Settings should inform any members of the delivery team and evaluation team who are visiting the school about the school's safeguarding processes and provide details of the school staff member whom they should contact should a safeguarding disclosure need to be made. They should ensure that members of the delivery team and evaluation team are never left unsupervised with children. A member of setting staff should always be present to supervise activities.

Has the EYCP evaluation study received ethical approval?

This evaluation study has received ethical approval from the Ethics Committee at Durham University.

Where can I find out the results of this evaluation study?

At the end of the evaluation study a final report is written by the evaluation team. This is due in July 2026 and will be published by the EEF on their website (educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk).

Who do I contact if I have further questions?

<p>Questions about the EYCP training programme? Please contact the EYCP delivery team at East London Research School:</p> <p>Melissa Prendergast EYCP Delivery Lead Melissa.prendergast@sheringham-nur.newham.sch.uk</p> <p>Fliss James EYCP Delivery Lead Fliss.james@sheringham-nur.newham.sch.uk</p> <p>Meher Faisal EYCP Project Manager meher.faisal@sheringham-nur.newham.sch.uk</p> <p>East London Research School Sheringham Nursery School and Children's Centre Sheringham Avenue London E12 5PB</p>	<p>Questions about the EYCP Evaluation Study? Please contact the EYCP Evaluation Team at Durham University:</p> <p>EYCP evaluation team eycp.evaluation@durham.ac.uk</p> <p>Dr Xiaofei Qi EYCP Project Investigator xiaofei.qi@durham.ac.uk</p> <p>Vic Menzies EYCP Project Investigator victoria.menzies@durham.ac.uk</p> <p>School of Education Durham University Durham DH1 3LE</p>
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