

# Evaluation of the Positive Early Childhood Education (PECE) programme

## Information sheet for settings

The National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) will carry out an independent evaluation of the Positive Early Childhood Education (PECE) training programme, which is being run in your area by Triple P UK (TPUK). PECE is a professional development programme that helps early years practitioners create warm, consistent and responsive environments that support children's emotional, behavioural and cognitive self-regulation. The evaluation will help us understand whether PECE improves outcomes for 3-4-year-olds in nursery settings (nursery classes in primary schools, and day nurseries and pre-schools in the private and voluntary sector). Taking part gives your setting access to free, high-quality training, support throughout the year, and the chance to contribute to important national research.

### What does the programme involve?

PECE is a professional development programme designed to fit into everyday nursery life. It focuses on simple, consistent strategies that support children's self-regulation.

PECE strategies can be used during group time, free play, transitions, outdoor activities and routines. They focus on helping children understand feelings, take turns, manage frustration, persist with tasks, and interact positively with others.

Each setting participating in the intervention arm will nominate:

- **One PECE Coach** – usually the setting manager who attends a two-day remote training, followed by a one-day workshop and half day accreditation. Additionally, coaches will complete the 4-module online programme. Coaches learn the PECE approach and then support their educators in using it across the setting.
- **PECE Educators** – up to ten educators working directly with 3-4-year-olds who complete a 4 module self-paced online course. The course introduces PECE strategies and shows how they can be embedded into daily routines.

After training, Coaches will deliver 2-4 short practice sessions with the educators within their setting to help Educators use PECE strategies confidently and consistently. TPUK will offer both clinical and implementation support to the PECE coach throughout the trial, to answer questions and support implementation.

### Who is running the project?

Triple P UK (TPUK) will deliver the PECE training. They are part of the wider Triple P Group, which provides evidence-informed programmes to support children's development, including PECE. TPUK will deliver the Coach training and accreditation workshops, provide the online training for

Educators, and offer clinical and implementation support throughout the trial. They will also administer financial payments to settings.

The National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) is a not-for-profit social research organisation. They will be independently evaluating the impact of PECE. NatCen will manage data collection, random allocation, surveys, interviews and observations.

### What does the evaluation involve?

NatCen's evaluation wants to find out whether the PECE programme has an impact on children's self-regulation. We will do this by comparing children in settings where staff received training in PECE with children in settings that did not receive the training.

The evaluation will be a randomised controlled trial. This means that staff at half of the settings taking part in the evaluation will receive the PECE training programme (the intervention group) and staff at the other settings will carry on with their normal teaching and childcare (the comparison group). Random allocation ensures there is a fair process to decide which settings receive the programme. Using randomly assigned groups is the best way of evaluating if a programme has an impact on children's outcomes, as the two groups can be assumed to be the same, therefore any differences in outcomes can be attributed to the programme.

At the end of the evaluation, NatCen will compare children's personal, social and emotional development across both groups, to see if there is any difference. TPUK will inform settings about their allocation to intervention group or comparison group in October 2026.

As part of the evaluation, all settings will be asked to:

- Share a parent information sheet with families
- Share information about staff and children securely with NatCen
- Ask staff to complete short online surveys
- Facilitate task-based observations carried out by independent testing administrators
- Support research activities such as interviews and observations (selected settings).

Training will take place between November and December 2026, and settings will continue implementing PECE strategies until July 2027.

We are aiming to recruit 140 settings to the trial before the end of August 2026. A small number of settings will be invited to join the waiting list and may be offered a place in the trial if a space becomes available before setting allocation in October 2026.

### Who can take part?

Settings can take part if they:

- Are a day nursery or pre-school in the private or voluntary sector, a state-funded nursery school, or a nursery class in a state-funded primary school

- Have at least 16 children aged 3–4 (attending at least 10 hours a week) enrolled in September 2026 (born between 1 September 2022 and 31 August 2023)
- Have a nominated PECE Coach who is based within their own setting; this role cannot be fulfilled by a manager or leader who works across multiple settings within a nursery chain
- Commit to not taking part in another EEF trial with 3–4-year-olds during the same year (excluding the Maths Champions Scale-up programme that EEF is supporting)
- Have not already delivered the PECE programme within the last 5 years or currently offer a Triple P programme to parents in their setting

All children aged 3-4 years old in the setting can potentially benefit from exposure to the programme. However, for very large settings, a maximum of 25 eligible children (attending at least 10 hours a week) will be randomly selected to participate in the evaluation activities to help make data collection more manageable.

### What are the benefits of participating?

If allocated to the intervention group, your setting will:

- Access free, high quality professional development designed to build a consistent approach across your setting
- Gain practical strategies to support children’s self-regulation and prosocial behaviour
- Receive £400 in total, split into two payments, for supporting the evaluation
- Receive £7.50 an hour (up to 7 hours) per educator and £60 per day for the PECE coach (up to 3.5 days), towards staff time
- Receive a £50 voucher for completing paper questionnaires about children’s behaviour and additional thank you payments will be given to settings selected to take part in interviews and in observations of coaching sessions.

If allocated to the comparison group, your setting will:

- Contribute to national evidence on how to best support young children’s emotional and behavioural development
- Receive a thank you payment of £1,400, split into two payments, for supporting the evaluation
- Receive a £50 voucher for completing paper questionnaires about children’s behaviour and additional thank you payments will be given to settings selected to take part in interviews and in observations of coaching sessions.

Settings on the waitlist will:

- Have the opportunity to take part in the evaluation, if a place becomes available.
- Receive £100 as a thank you for completing baseline data collection activities for eligible pupils if not granted a place on the trial.

### Are there any costs involved?

Normally, there is a cost for participating in the PECE programme, but for settings taking part in this evaluation, participation is free.

### How will data be used?

NatCen will collect information about your setting, staff and children to run the evaluation. This includes basic child information (such as names, dates of birth and attendance hours), staff training information, and survey responses. Only staff who choose to take part in interviews will be interviewed.

Triple P UK are working with PLMR to lead on the setting recruitment for the trial. PLMR and TPUK have a data processing agreement for these purposes. The recruitment data collections will include Early Years setting name, setting manager first name, last name, work contact details, setting size and number of staff. Triple P UK may collect personal data from staff taking part in their professional development activities as part of the usual delivery of the programme to ensure that all the relevant materials and training sessions can be provided.

All data will be stored securely and kept confidential.

No setting, practitioner or child will be named in any report. Parents can opt their child out of the evaluation. At the end of the project, anonymised data will be archived by EEF so it can be used for future research. Longer-term child outcomes will be analysed by linking data collected as a part of the impact evaluation to the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) data from the National Pupil Database.

More information can be found in our privacy notice, which you can find online at:  
<https://natcen.ac.uk/evaluation-pece-privacy-notice>

### What is the timeline for this project?

Details of the evaluation activities can be found in the table below.

Timing	Evaluation activity
March – August 2026	Settings sign up to the programme
September 2026	All settings share pupil and staff details with NatCen/TPUK Practitioner online survey (all settings)
October 2026	Settings are randomised
November – December 2026	8 Practitioner telephone interviews (selected settings)
March - April 2027	Visits to 6 settings – coaching session observations and interviews
June – July 2027	Practitioner online survey (all settings)

	Practitioner's complete questionnaires about children (all settings) Observational assessments of children (all settings) 20 Practitioner telephone interviews (selected settings)
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Details of the delivery activities can be found in the table below.

<b>Timing</b>	<b>Delivery Activity</b>
March – August 2026	All settings participate in the onboarding process. Settings will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Actively engage in TPUK's onboarding process</li> <li>Submit fully completed and signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)</li> <li>Sign and return the data sharing agreement</li> </ul>
September 2026	All settings share pupil and staff details with NatCen/TPUK
October 2026	Implementation planning (intervention group only). Setting managers will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participate in a 1.5-hour Implementation Planning Cluster (Session 1).</li> <li>Have access to 2 hours per month of Implementation Consultant 'office hours' from October 2026 to May 2027</li> </ul>
November – December 2026	PECE Programme Training. Coaches attend: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two-day online PECE Coach Training</li> <li>One-day online Pre-Accreditation Workshop</li> <li>One-day online Accreditation Workshop</li> </ul> PECE coaches and educators will complete the PECE online training, which consists of four modules
January 2027	Setting managers participate in a 1.5-hour Implementation Cluster Support Session 2
April 2027	Setting managers attend a 1.5-hour Implementation Cluster Session 3
January – June 2027	Educators integrate strategies into the classroom PECE coaches conduct two to four practice sessions (approximately 50mins each session) with educators PECE coaches receive 2 hours of clinical support from a Triple P trainer (online)

## What next?

Places are limited and will be offered on a first-come, first-served basis. To find out more about the programme email [earlyyearspeceproject@triplep.uk.net](mailto:earlyyearspeceproject@triplep.uk.net) for next steps, including booking onto one of our onboarding workshops.

If, after actively engaging in TPUK's onboarding process, you are happy to take part, please carefully read and sign the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). NatCen will then be in touch closer to September 2026 to share more information about the evaluation and collect details.

## Who do I contact for more information?

If you have any questions about Triple P UK or the training programme, please contact [earlyyearspeceproject@triplep.uk.net](mailto:earlyyearspeceproject@triplep.uk.net)

If you have any questions relating to the evaluation, please contact the NatCen research team at [PECE@natcen.ac.uk](mailto:PECE@natcen.ac.uk).

You can find out more about:

- TPUK at <https://www.triplep.uk.net/uk/en/home/>
- NatCen at <https://natcen.ac.uk/>
- EEF at <http://www.educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk>