



Evidence Summary—Technical Annex:

There is some evidence that teaching and modelling social communication to children in early years settings has a positive impact on their prosocial behaviour and personal, social and emotional development. Showing children good examples of social communication is a relatively well evidenced way of supporting their learning about social communication; puppets and stories are often activities used in the interventions researched (Brazzelli, Grazzani and Pepe, 2021; Grazzani, Ornaghi and Brockmeier, 2016; Ornaghi et al., 2015; Ostrov et al., 2015). One of these studies also shows that having conversations with children about prosocial behaviours is an important part of them adopting these behaviours successfully (Brazzelli, Grazzani and Pepe, 2021).

Coaching children in prosocial skills such as supporting peers and asking questions of peers can also have a positive impact (Mize and Ladd, 1990). Although this study found that the intervention improved children's knowledge and use of friendly social strategies, there was no evidence that this affected how children were seen by their peers.

Two evaluative studies of an intervention which teaches pragmatic skills alongside language skills identify positive effects on children's social interaction skills, including co-operation, assertiveness and self-control (Benner and Zeng, 2017; Waldron-Soler et al., 2002). A further study of an intervention promoting communication and social skills identifies a positive impact on children's ability to express themselves, their awareness of others' inner world, their attention to emotions and thoughts, and their ability to resolve conflict (Aram and Shlak, 2008). Positive effects have been found from a programme which aimed to develop social skills such as thanking, turn-taking and being helpful and thus to develop positive relationships with classmates (Ginevra et al., 2020). Children's social problem-solving skills also improved.

There is little evaluative research in this area, with a relatively large proportion of the randomised controlled trials identified coming from one research team. Several multi- component programmes include elements of teaching and modelling social communication (e.g. PATHS, Incredible Years). There is evidence that these programmes have a positive effect on young children's personal, social and emotional development, but it is not possible to identify the individual components of these programmes that have this positive effect.



References

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