

Recruitment Case Studies

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Learning Language and Loving It



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Programme type	Age group	Delivery mode	Training mode	Recruitment target	Recruitment area	Recruitment experience
Efficacy trial	3-4 year-olds	Whole class	Face to face	140 nurseries	Regional	Yes

Learning Language and Loving It—The Hanen Program® for Early Childhood Educators (LLLI) is a training programme for Early Years practitioners to promote language and early literacy. Communicate SLT CIC, a Blackpool-based speech, language and communication service organisation, delivered the programme for this trial. Their recruitment target was 140 nurseries in the North West and into West Yorkshire. The team started recruiting in January and had surpassed the recruitment target by May.

What worked well?

The delivery organisation **approached all relevant local authorities** in the North West and West Yorkshire about the trial. They thought carefully about **who in the Local Authority would be the best person to contact**, for example the early years settings improvement teams. Recruitment was most successful in the areas where the local authority supported the promotion of the trial to their local settings.

Communication SLT CIC also approached settings by email themselves. They implemented a **dual approach** of settings hearing about the trial directly from them, as well as through the local authority. Within target areas, settings were also phoned to ensure emails about the trial were sent to the most appropriate person.

A priority for the team was **ensuring that settings had a full understanding of the trial** before they signed up. They made it a condition of taking part that settings had to either attend a face-to-face recruitment event or take part in an online webinar, to learn about the trial and have the chance to ask any questions. To ensure maximum efficiency of this process, they created an **online booking form** through Google forms for settings to use to sign up to an event. They hosted 17 face-to-face and three webinars in order to **give settings plenty of choice**. This online booking system reduced administrative burden on the team and ensured settings could book onto events immediately, with automatic email confirmation. They **handed out MOUs and information packs** at these events and set clear deadlines for the MOUs to be handed in. In all communications, they ensured a **clear ‘call to action’**, for example, to book a place on an information session, or complete the MOU.

They also **capitalised on ‘early adopter’ settings**, encouraging such settings to promote the trial to other local settings. This was of benefit as the delivery was in a cluster model, so more local settings being involved would benefit the settings already signed up, by making it less likely they would need to travel far for training sessions. This was an effective approach in gaining more expressions of interest.

Key takeaways:

- Wraparound promotion will help ensure settings hear about the programme from multiple sources.
- Easily accessible events, such as webinars, are an opportunity to provide full details of the programme and send out MOUs.
- Early adopter settings can support recruitment and cluster delivery.



Programme type	Age group	Delivery mode	Training mode	Recruitment target	Recruitment area	Recruitment experience
Efficacy trial	Reception	Whole class	Hybrid	176 schools	Regional	Yes

Counting Collections is a hands-on early mathematics approach to develop children's number sense, delivered by the University of Nottingham. Children take part in weekly Counting Collections sessions of around 30 minutes in which they work in pairs to choose, count and record items provided as part of a 'counting library', thereby improving their understanding of number and quantity, specifically, counting, subitising, comparing numbers and composition of numbers.

What worked well?

The delivery lead at the University of Nottingham had prior experience of running and recruiting for the programme, which informed a refined recruitment strategy for the 2022/23 round. The team began recruiting for this round later than anticipated but were able to successfully recruit through a range of strategies.

Understanding the demands of recruitment in advance enabled effective planning and capacity building within the team, which included a Research Operations Officer and a Research Assistant. Knowing the staff and their networks enabled them to make best use of existing connections and identify areas where they had fewer contacts.

The team benefited from the delivery lead's professional relationships with early maths networks, and her knowledge of regional school contexts. This allowed the team to produce **bespoke recruitment materials for different regions**, which included relevant information about travel to face-to-face training, for example. They also recognised that there were areas in which the team were not well networked, but this allowed them to plan early on how they would establish contacts there.

The team adopted a **tiered approach to recruitment**, building a spreadsheet of priority contacts in local education system leadership including Research Schools, Maths Hubs and Local Authorities. Where there was an existing professional relationship, contacts received a **personalised email** which provided recruitment information for their area. The team also **conducted research to identify contacts** in areas where existing connections were weaker. At this stage it was useful to draw any prior contact to build a connection, for example, noting in correspondence events attended or mutual contacts.

A second tier included other potentially useful known contacts in subject associations, headteacher groups and local universities, as well as MAT leaders identified from government databases – although named contacts for CEOs and subject leaders were not always available.

The third tier consisted of schools themselves. Whilst direct contact with schools can be an effective strategy, the University of Nottingham team ranked this lower in their priority list due to their previous experience of low success, demonstrating their **iterative approach**.

The resources that were included in correspondence to the first and second tiers were crucial for the team's success (in fact, the team were able to meet their recruitment targets without having to approach the third tier). These included **branded PowerPoint slides** which could be shared at local network meetings, and a **flyer with a QR code linking to a dedicated webpage** featuring a two-

minute video presentation by the delivery lead. Recipients were also provided with a **dedicated email address and Twitter handle**, which were monitored by the delivery team.

The team also made use of **local authority and Initial Teacher Education provider newsletters**, noting that some have easily accessible request pages where programme teams can submit material for promotion.

The team maintained an **active list of EOIs and MOUs received by date**, to support prioritisation of follow-up phone calls to schools. Schools also received an **immediate response to queries or EOI** submissions as this helped increase return rates for MOUs.

EEF sponsored social media content, which the team re-posted, tagging in the local Research School, Teaching School Hub and Maths Hub, boosted EOIs at regular intervals throughout the recruitment period.

Key takeaways:

- Build a list of contacts prior to recruitment, and personalise correspondence where possible.
- Use local knowledge to offer bespoke materials and utilise Local Authority newsletters.
- Maximise the reach of social media by tagging partner organisations, Research Schools and other relevant parties.

Programme type	Age group	Delivery mode	Training mode	Recruitment target	Recruitment area	Recruitment experience
Efficacy trial	Years 10-11	Whole class	Face to face	100 schools	Regional	No

FLASH (Fast Logical Aspirational Student Help) marking is a school-developed feedback approach in which teachers give skills-based comments rather than grades in Key Stage 4 English. The approach has been devised by staff at Meols Cop High School in Southport. The delivery team were teachers and had no experience of recruiting schools to a programme or trial before. They had a target of recruiting 100 schools.

What worked well?

The team **thought about branding carefully**. They came up with the acronym 'FLASH' marking, as it was simple and indicated the essence of the approach, quick marking. They created an **eye-catching logo** and set up a dedicated FLASH marking Twitter account @FLASHmarking and website www.flashmarking.com, which they now use in the delivery phase for intervention allocated schools. The developer **approached TES** and offered to write a feature article on their approach, which was published.

They pulled together an email database and sent emails to secondary subject leaders and headteachers, ensuring personalisation and **links to an FAQ document**, which they found resulted in fewer simple questions being asked, saving them time. Later on, they sent personalised letters and information packs to both subject leaders and headteachers, which were effective. A few teachers posted on Twitter about the letter they received and this created a conversation on Twitter. They held a series of **recruitment events** across the country in the 6 areas they were targeting, branding this the 'FLASH marking roadshow'. This was promoted heavily via Twitter and got good traction. They also proactively searched for **education conferences** relevant to assessment and feedback, approaching organisers to secure further promotional opportunities.

The team started recruiting in September and by Easter, had 100 schools signed up and 200 on the reserve list. The developer also believed that having **high expectations of schools** was important. Schools were given a date to submit the MOU and not given an option to miss it, and the developer had to be sure that the school were dedicated to the trial to be allocated a space. This would also support retention during the project.

Challenges

It wasn't always easy; the team highlighted that the process was time intensive and there were times they worried about reaching targeted recruitment numbers. They reported having to **continuously evaluate their approach and try new things**. To support this, the team came together weekly to evaluate the recruitment strategy and progress. They also highlighted that much of the success was down to having the **right make up of roles in the team**. They recruited a full-time administrative position for the project and ensured that during the interview process they focused on assessing skills to support the recruitment aspect of the project, in order to secure someone for this role who could accelerate these efforts. The developers could therefore focus on activities such as presenting at the roadshow information events.

Key takeaways:

- Clear branding, which communicates the nature of the programme, will provide a shareable asset.
- Attend relevant events to promote the programme.
- Schedule regular recruitment reviews and be ready to try new approaches as needed.

Programme type	Age group	Delivery mode	Training mode	Recruitment target	Recruitment area	Recruitment experience
Effectiveness trial	Year 2	Targeted	Face to face	235 schools	Regional	Yes

1stClass@Number 1 is a small-group maths intervention delivered by Teaching Assistants (TAs) to pupils requiring additional support in numeracy in Year 2. TAs receive training to develop their own mathematical understanding, and to support children to think and talk about maths using metacognitive skills. The programme consists of around 30 half-hour lessons, delivered three times a week for 10 weeks in addition to normal mathematics instruction.

What worked well?

One strength of the delivery team was their **links with universities and Maths Hubs**, which provided opportunities for sharing the programme specification. However, the Edge Hill team noted a difference in priorities between their focus on catch-up learning and the Maths Hubs' focus on universal quality-first teaching, which had to be considered in messaging about the programme.

The delivery lead reflected that tapping into the university's partnership network allowed them to make connections in new areas. One new strategy involved approaching the Universities' Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET), which provided **links to Initial Teacher Training departments** with school partnerships.

Once local links were in place, the team adopted a **two-pronged approach**, whereby trainers in the field channeled interest to the EOI form, while the delivery lead contacted schools directly to raise awareness of the programme. They also used their **school knowledge** to ensure that schools received the programme information sheet when they were able to make a decision about signing up. Demands on school staff time mean that long initial communications are often not read in full, leading to additional work for the delivery team in following up with reminder emails and managing expressions of interest from ineligible schools.

Managing expressions of interest from ineligible schools was very time consuming. The delivery lead therefore adopted a strategy of contacting interested schools meeting the evaluation criteria directly to establish numbers of FSM-eligible pupils in the target group.

The team managed their time by **focusing their initial efforts on the most engaged schools to maximise conversion from EOI to MOU**. Once a first round was secured, they were able to follow-up with schools who hadn't returned MOUs, and begin securing a second round.

Challenges

This is a targeted intervention which typically requires schools to identify 4 pupils to take part. For this evaluation, as randomisation was to be at pupil level, initially each school had to identify at least 12-16 pupils that needed support with maths. This ruled out some schools that had fewer pupils needing support, resulting in a smaller recruitment pool. To mitigate this, the evaluator lowered the required number of pupils from 16 to 10 (allowing for at least 4 pupils at each school to be allocated to the treatment and control groups respectively), with around 50 % of those pupils being FSM-eligible.

Additionally, in preparation for recruitment, the Edge Hill team had selected delivery areas in advance of the evaluation design. Therefore, when the evaluation design changed, they had to adjust the areas they would target. This illustrates both the need for **advance planning** of recruitment and for **flexibility in response to evaluator needs**.

Programme trainers were well connected with the Hubs in their areas, however, the face-to-face training model restricted recruitment to schools able or willing to commute to venues. In addition, the delivery lead reflected that the local trainer model generated fewer MOUs than anticipated in some areas, with the most important enabler for recruitment in this instance being academic partnerships.

Key takeaways:

- Working with an evaluation team involves a degree of flexibility to ensure robust evaluation design.
- Clear communication of eligibility criteria is key to meeting recruitment targets and minimising additional workload.
- Harnessing partnerships enables greater reach into new areas.



Focus4TAPS

Programme type	Age group	Delivery mode	Training mode	Recruitment target	Recruitment area	Recruitment experience
Subsidised programme	Year 5	Whole class	Face to face	100 schools	Regional	Yes

Focus for Teacher Assessment in Primary Science (Focus4TAPS) is a year-long professional development programme for science subject leaders and teachers, supporting their use of assessment for learning. The programme focuses on assessing practical inquiry tasks, thereby helping pupils develop their scientific reasoning, and their metacognitive skills, through self- and peer-assessment.

The delivery team at Bath Spa University had a recruitment target of 100 schools from ten regions in England (excluding London and the South East). They began recruiting in January 2023, with a deadline of June. After filling half their places earlier than anticipated, they were able to move the deadline forward to April, and achieved their target before the end of March.

What worked well?

As a former teacher, the programme delivery lead had a **detailed understanding of school context** and the current interest in science as a previously under-supported curriculum area. There was therefore clear potential to engage some schools in a science programme, whilst others were likely to be prioritising other subjects. There was some uncertainty over whether the cost of the programme would be a barrier to some schools, as the delivery team had previously completed an EEF trial in which incentives were paid to schools. However, the 20% cost payable by schools after EEF subsidy appeared not to deter them from applying.

The Bath Spa team used a range of strategies to recruit schools, noting that their success was in large part down to the **time invested in planning** before recruitment opened. This planning consisted of identifying a contact list of decision makers in schools and key local network leads; developing **clear eligibility criteria**, so that schools would receive **prompt confirmation of eligibility**, and **building knowledgeable local leads** and a **central point of contact** who would be equipped to respond in detail to school inquiries.

Most importantly, the delivery team dedicated the six months prior to recruitment to building the regional networks for their training model: **utilising trainers' existing contacts** as part of the recruitment process, and investing time helping newer trainers embed themselves in their regions. During the recruitment period, this approach led to **quick conversion from expression of interest to signing an MOU** among schools in well-networked areas, thus freeing up resources to support newer trainers to build relationships with their local schools.

Once recruitment was underway, the team found it important to **maintain a sense of pace** between a school first engaging and signing up, through clear, regular communication. MOU details and personalised reminders were sent to Headteachers and Science leads as soon as they expressed interest. The team also developed a **series of messages that would serve as prompts** as well as answering common questions. Sending updates on remaining places (e.g. "We are now 50% full") also helped galvanise sign-ups.

Where these strategies did not lead to a school signing up, the team were clear at which point not to invest time in pursuing non-respondents further, and how much capacity to commit to establishing fresh contacts.

Challenges

The team found that generic communications resulted in **time lost to handling expressions of interest from ineligible schools**. **Regionally targeted communications** were therefore more efficient.

A recruitment webinar was scheduled to take place during the recruitment period, however, places were already over half full by the scheduled date. Whilst this wasn't an issue per se, the timing meant that many schools had to wait several weeks for the webinar after expressing interest, at the risk of them losing interest. To mitigate this, the team recorded an **informational video** which was instead sent to schools on completion of the EOI form.

Key takeaways:

- Dedicate time before recruitment opens to developing the recruitment team's knowledge and capacity.
- Where the programme uses local trainers, harness their contacts and support them to expand their networks.
- Consider recording an informational video to share.

Programme type	Age group	Delivery mode	Training mode	Recruitment target	Recruitment area	Recruitment experience
Effectiveness trial	Years 5-6	Targeted	Hybrid	300 schools	National	Yes

Reciprocal Reading is a structured, discussion-based approach to the teaching of reading comprehension designed and delivered by FFT. It aims to develop children's understanding of text and teach them strategies for making sense of what they read. Trained teaching assistants (or teachers) deliver two 20–30-minute sessions a week, for a minimum of 12 weeks, to small groups of pupils in year 5 and 6 identified as having reading comprehension difficulties by FFT's screening tool.

What worked well?

The FFT team began recruitment from a strong position: they had a **large contact base to work from** due to already having products in schools. They were also confident that the heavily subsidised one-off offer of Reciprocal Reading would be appealing (as opposed to a subscription, which can be challenging for schools with limited budgets and high staff turnover to commit to).

The trial's eligibility criteria led the team to devise **three priority levels for recruiting schools**. 'P1' included larger schools with at least one Year 5 class, clustered around the face-to-face training venues; P2 and P3 respectively included smaller schools who were less likely to have the required number of eligible pupils and schools further from the training venues. This system also allowed the team to manage recruitment from the 50% EIA target areas.

Once they had expressed interest, P1 (and most P2) schools were invited to a webinar, which the team delivered weekly throughout the recruitment period, **at different times each week to fit around school schedules**. Schools could also sign up to the webinar on the FFT website via Eventbrite.

The **webinars provided all the information schools would need to make a decision on signing up**. The team felt they achieved a good balance between ensuring schools fully understood the commitment without putting them off. Webinar content included:

- Detail on the Reciprocal Reading programme, including a video of delivery in a classroom,
- Explanation of randomisation, making clear that schools had a 50% chance of receiving the intervention,
- A schedule of key requirements,
- Details of training locations.

After the webinars, all those registered (including those who had not attended) received the presentation in a follow-up email. Schools who had attended immediately received the MOU, and were also provided with a **briefing on selecting pupils**.

Communications with schools pre- and post-webinar were a key part of the team's success. In the first instance, they promoted the programme through **personalised emails to Headteachers** in their contact base. The team of eight adopted an **account-handler approach**, so that schools would have a named contact throughout their journey from expressing interest to completion of the trial.

They **used effective messaging** around eligibility criteria to **generate enthusiasm**, communicating that schools had been 'selected' to take part. They also **generated momentum** through regular updates on recruitment progress to schools who had not returned MOUs, stressing that places were

almost filled and that schools would be put on a waiting list. Towards the end of the recruitment period, the team were clear with schools who had not returned MOUs that their space would not be held.

The team planned communications in advance for schools from P2 and P3 areas who expressed interest, so that applicants were given clear explanations as to the reasons for ineligibility, or had the information they needed to judge whether attending face-to-face training at a distance was a realistic option for them. Where appropriate, the team also used this opportunity to direct schools to other FFT products.

Key takeaways:

- Ensure promotional content emphasises the programme's strengths from schools' point of view.
- Where relevant, harness brand awareness to offer schools a familiar/trusted product.
- Have a clear rationale for prioritising particular areas/schools.

Programme type	Age group	Delivery mode	Training mode	Recruitment target	Recruitment area	Recruitment experience
Subsidised programme	Years 7-8	Targeted	Online	100 schools	Regional	Yes

Switch-on Reading is an intensive, daily, ten-week reading intervention administered one-to-one by TAs, librarians or teachers to Year 7 and 8 pupils struggling most with reading and decoding. The programme is delivered by Nottinghamshire County Council and available to all schools in England, including special schools. The aim is for pupils working well below expected reading age to gain confidence and independence in reading, and thus to be able to participate more fully in the classroom. It also aims to support reading recovery post-Covid.

What worked well?

The delivery team had experience of the challenges of recruitment in the previous academic year. Through **council connections** they had access to databases of school contacts in both Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, and **academic connections** in Initial Teacher Education at Birmingham City University provided contacts for placement schools.

Recruitment for this delivery period was scheduled earlier in the academic year than the previous recruitment round, which led to increased interest. The delivery team understood the particular **demands of the different school terms** and the implications for the programme: during the summer term, for example, TAs are often required for exam support and therefore less likely to be available for training. Autumn and spring are better times for schools to absorb information from external sources and take on new initiatives. The team held webinars early in the recruitment process, sending out information on signing up to attendees.

They also team developed a flyer as part of their communication with schools. This contained an **eye-catching** image and concise information about the programme, with a link to express interest, and was embedded in emails rather than attached as a separate document.

Initially the team sent the school information sheet to schools who completed expressions of interest. However, they reflected that they could **reduce the steps involved for schools** by sending out the MOU with the SIS. This also meant that school administration staff who received emails had all the information needed to bring to school leaders.

In areas beyond those where the team already had links, they were **creative in how they expanded their reach**. They contacted Headteachers at virtual schools, librarians and the programme's book supplier, all of whom were able to share the flyer. They also **allocated a half day to their trainers for recruitment**.

The delivery team emphasised the excellent support from their administrator, who was knowledgeable about the programme and had a **system in place for handling busy and quiet times** – having resources on hand to get schools signed up quickly during busy times, and using quiet times to follow up with schools who hadn't returned MOUs.

Challenges

The highly targeted and intensive nature of the programme enables it to address the needs of the most struggling readers, however, some schools were looking for phonics or larger group interventions or programmes aimed at children with higher reading ages. Clear messaging was

needed to ensure schools understood the nature of the programme and its benefits. For example, schools receive training in reading recovery principles and a book pack, allowing them to roll out support beyond the children identified for the initial one-to-one intervention.

Their main reflection was the **importance of developing clear messaging**. Some schools needed **clarification on the initial outlay** for books and the **number of staff who would receive training**, for example. The team wanted to emphasise the real draw of the programme being the support for post-Covid reading recovery, both in terms of grounding in reading recovery principles and physical resources.

The 50% EIA recruitment target presented a challenge in that the delivery team had to **manage a waiting list** as they approached the target while continuing to promote the programme. Whilst this speaks of the success of the recruitment process to that point, it suggests that planning for this situation in advance would be of benefit.

Key takeaways:

- FAQ documents help settings make informed decisions to take part, minimising additional follow-up contact. Previous teams have taken different approaches to when they provide information to settings – think about what makes sense for your programme and adjust the timing if necessary during the process.
- Understand the different demands of school terms.
- Plan actions for busier and quieter periods.

Programme type	Age group	Delivery mode	Training mode	Recruitment target	Recruitment area	Recruitment experience
Subsidised programme	Years 7-11	Whole school	Hybrid	120 schools	National	Yes

Embedding Formative Assessment (EFA) is a professional development programme delivered by SSAT over two years which aims to improve pupil outcomes by embedding the use of formative assessment strategies across a school. EFA supports schools with implementation by providing detailed resource packs on establishing Teacher Learning Communities and running regular workshops and structured peer observations focusing on the use of formative assessment strategies.

What worked well?

SSAT recruited schools with a secondary phase and ran the programme during the previous academic year (2021/22). **Strong and consistent branding** meant that the programme had already gained a **positive reputation** among schools, which helped the delivery team make a strong start when recruitment opened for the 2022/23 round. This groundwork also allowed SSAT to start recruitment in October, giving them nearly a full academic year to recruit and prepare schools for the programme.

Social media promotion by EEF and Dylan Wiliam helped raise the programme's profile and increase its reach. In addition, the programme received promotion through **reference in reports** on professional development and assessment. Teachers who had recently completed **NPQs** had learned of the programme and were looking for opportunities for continuing professional development and school improvement were a key audience.

SSAT began with **nationwide promotion**, opting to reach as far as possible during initial recruitment stages through attending exhibitions and regular advertising. Design support for the programme **leaflet** helped gain brand recognition and gave schools a tangible resource to share internally.

In November the team narrowed their focus to **target EIAs through direct mail**, ensuring that each communication included new information, such as links to blogs, invitations to introductory webinars and events featuring Dylan Wiliam.

Interested schools were able to attend regular webinars scheduled throughout the recruitment period, which meant the team could signpost anyone who inquired about the programme to an upcoming event. The webinars consisted of approximately 20 minutes' input from the SSAT team and up to 40 minutes for questions. The webinars were not recorded, which encouraged attendees to engage freely in discussion. They were well-attended, with 30-40 attendees each, and resulted in a high conversion rate to MOU. The team continued to host webinars late into the recruitment period to **begin compiling a waiting list** of schools for subsequent recruitment rounds.

The team reflected that a more **conversational approach** to their in-house webinars was effective as it enabled schools to gain a fuller understanding of the programme and explore questions and considerations in-depth for their setting to inform their decision-making.

Lastly, due to the high demand generated for the programme, SSAT was able to share the programme in an **advertorial in Schools Week** magazine, which helped raised EFA's profile.

Challenges

The biggest barrier to schools signing up was instability in staffing. Whilst this was out of SSAT's control, they reported that **frequent staff changes posed challenges for a two-year programme**, and that this led them to consider the best way to **reinforce to schools the benefits** of whole-staff, longer-term professional development.

The delivery team also reflected that many schools are now in a better position post-Covid to consider longer-term priorities and engage with external professional development opportunities. However, they noted that this is not the case across the board, and that this remained a barrier for some schools.

Key takeaways:

- Dedicate resources to reputation building and generating momentum through regular presentations, webinars and promotion.
- Harness professional connections with trusted, high-profile figures.
- Consider adverts and articles in trade press.