

PROJECT TITLE	Evaluation of the Manor Park Talks pilot
DEVELOPER (INSTITUTION)	Sheringham Nursery School
EVALUATOR (INSTITUTION)	NatCen Social Research
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR(S)	Fatima Husain
STUDY PLAN AUTHOR(S)	Fatima Husain
PUPIL AGE RANGE AND KEY STAGE	Age 2 – Early years
NUMBER OF SCHOOLS/ SETTINGS	10
NUMBER OF PUPILS	n/a – this is not a pupil level intervention

Study plan version history

VERSION	DATE	REASON FOR REVISION
1.0	21/12/2018	N/A

Intervention

Manor Park Talks, to be piloted across 8 nursery settings in Manor Park, London Borough of Newham, is a professional development programme focused on improving the skills and expertise of the early years workforce in supporting early language development. Manor Park Talks consists of a revised and updated Every Child a Talker (ECaT). ECaT is a manualised intervention designed to improve early language development by increasing Early Years (EY) practitioners' skills and knowledge and parental understanding and involvement. Compared to ECaT, Manor Park Talks has been designed to put more emphasis on changes in pedagogy and less on the recording and tracking of assessment data and completion of audits. There is an emphasis on leadership, particularly supporting changes in practice, and evaluating the impact of those changes.

Manor Park Talks consists of training managers and practitioners to develop a whole-setting approach to promoting children's communication. The project focuses on listening to children and developing conversations with them using the following strategies:

- Conversational responsiveness
- Interactive book reading
- Using songs, rhymes, and stories to support expressive language
- Print referencing to support emergent literacy
- Listening to sounds.

Sheringham Nursery School will offer training to all early years practitioners within the pilot nurseries. Nursery staff who have undertaken the training are expected to apply their learning to the key target group - 120 disadvantaged children in receipt of Free Early Education Entitlement at age 2 (FEEE2).

The training for Manor Park talks will be delivered by trainers who were closely involved in the original development and roll-out of ECaT. Initial training to nursery managers will be a full day event attended by all managers of nurseries taking part in the pilot, including PVI and school-based providers. Content will be designed by the trainers in collaboration with Sheringham Nursery School.

A few weeks later, the trainers will visit each PVI setting to deliver a full day of bespoke training session to nursery practitioners. The training will consist of presentations and group exercises. The content will be designed to meet the individual needs of each setting and to focus on the central aims of Manor Park Talks – listening to children, developing conversations with them, and helping them to learn new vocabulary. The training will include: short films of children interacting with adults, and interactive session so that practitioners can practise their own techniques for listening and developing conversations. Practitioners will learn about how to observe practice to identify effective strategies and to give each other feedback.

An Early Years Consultant, appointed by Sheringham Nursery School will facilitate monthly coaching sessions for managers with a focus on implementing change, evaluating impact, and creating a local network for peer support and challenge. Mentors from the teaching team at Sheringham Nursery School will visit each setting at least termly, and more often when needed. They will support managers practically with implementation e.g. developing peer observation systems or helping managers with accurate self-evaluation. The mentors have been trained to use the ITES-3 environment rating scale which is being used as a proxy measure of change in quality.

The logic model specifying the core components of Manor Park Talks will be developed in a formative way during the course of the study and will be included in the final report. Following each stage of the research, emerging findings will be shared with Sheringham Nursery School. As part of this evidence sharing process which will be conducted at three points in time, the Manor Park Talks logic model will be developed and refined in collaboration with Sheringham Nursery School.

Research questions

The overall objectives of the evaluation are to understand the feasibility and acceptability of Manor Park Talks. The evaluation will not assess the intervention's 'readiness for trial' but instead will focus on 'readiness for scaling-up across Newham', as agreed with the developer and the EEF at set-up. A formative approach will focus on:

- Identifying reported changes in practice
- Reviewing materials and CPD provision
- Exploring perceived barriers and facilitators to success, including joined-up working
- Identifying the necessary components of Manor Park Talks through a triangulation of all data collected
- Assessing perceived scalability.

The detailed research questions that the evaluation is designed to address, along with the methods to be used, are set out in the table overleaf.

IPE Category	Research Questions
Evidence of Promise	What is the intervention logic and what need does it address?
	What are the potential benefits, if any of the intervention for Early Years staff?
	What are the perceived potential benefits for children?
	Do there appear to be any unintended consequences or negative effects?
Feasibility	Was the intervention delivered as intended?
	Did the intervention reach its target audiences?
	What were the barriers/facilitators to engagement?
	What are practitioners' perceptions of the training?
	What are managers and EY leads perceptions of the monthly coaching and sharing best practice sessions?
	Are practitioners receiving the right amount of training and support?
	What are the barriers and facilitators to professional development? How does this vary across sites?
	Do practitioners believe that the intervention is the appropriate approach to improving children's language and communication development?
	Have practitioners been able to apply learning to their classroom practice in the intended way?

Readiness for scaling-up across Newham	Does the intervention have sufficient specificity for scaling-up?
	Are there identifiable 'components' within the intervention? How may these be assessed?
	How can delivery be optimised?
	What data indicators could be used to provide evidence of impact on intended outcomes?
	Are there any key contextual factors that appear to facilitate or impede successful implementation?
	Is the intervention considered to be affordable?
	Can the intervention be delivered to scale? What level of flexibility/adaptation is acceptable?

Methods

Recruitment

Sheringham Nursery School recruited ten early years settings (PVI nurseries) to take part in the pilot. Participation was offered to all local settings in the Manor Park neighbourhood of Newham with funded two-year olds on roll. 10 settings volunteered to join the project. All local schools with a nursery class (6) together with Sheringham Nursery School were included in the launch day PD and the coaching sessions. NatCen issued a privacy notice and a research information sheet were provided to all pilot settings. In addition, Sheringham Nursery has issued a parent information sheet to inform parents that their child's nursery is delivering Manor Park Talks.

Data collection

To gather breadth and depth of insight, data collection will include research across all nursery settings as well as case study research in selected settings. All data collected for the purpose of this evaluation will be carried out by the NatCen team.

Cross-site research

The purpose of this element is to develop a comprehensive understanding of training and the on-going coaching provided to early years staff and managers across all 8 nurseries. It comprises three types of data collection:

Observation of the launch: Data will be collected on how the intervention is introduced by Sheringham Nursery to nursery setting staff. In addition, attendance at the event will be an opportunity to meet attendees who are likely to be our key contact in nurseries.

Observation of bespoke training sessions: in-setting training will be delivered in each setting once. The NatCen research team will be observing the training at each setting, with each researcher observing at least two sessions. Data will be collected on how MPT strategies are discussed and the level of specificity provided by the trainers. Observation of training elements that are bespoke and those that are consistent across all nurseries will be noted. A template covering the five Manor Park Talks strategies and additional contextual questions will be used to record observations.

Nursery manager interviews: as soon after the bespoke training as possible, the setting manager will be interviewed to gather perceptions of attending the training and to discuss how the MPT strategies will be applied across the nursery setting by all staff.

Interviews with trainers: once all the bespoke training sessions have been delivered, the trainers (2) will be interviewed to gather their views on delivering the training, the perceived responsiveness of attendees, and any reported insights into the barriers and facilitators to delivery.

Coaching session observations: five of the seven coaching sessions will be observed in order to understand knowledge sharing about MPT and how well the managers are developing their

skills in leading pedagogical change, evaluating impact, and linking together for peer support and challenge.

Case study research

To gather depth of insight into how nursery staff are applying their learning and to find out which strategies are being delivered (and how), five nurseries will be purposively selected as case studies. At each of these five settings the following data collection will be carried out:

Spring term: a site visit carried out by NatCen will comprise interviews with the nursery manager and two members of staff. These interviews will include a discussion on how the setting is progressing in relation to delivering the strategies and gather their views on the coaching sessions and on-going provision of support.

Summer term: for case study settings, the data collection methods used during the spring term will be replicated. One interview with the nursery manager in non-case study nurseries will be conducted as well. In addition to asking about the delivery of the five MPT strategies, interviews will focus on discussions about what was perceived to work best, what needs to change, and what advice they would give to nurseries preparing to deliver MPT.

In advance of interviews and observations, the researcher will outline NatCen's role as independent evaluators, which will cover confidentiality and data protection.

Data analysis

All observation and interview data will be recorded, professionally transcribed, and thematically coded using Framework in Nvivo. Using the themes covered in interview topic guides and incorporating new emerging themes a matrix will be set out in which each row represents an individual and each column a theme and any related sub-themes. Transcript data is thematically summarised and illustrative verbatim quotes added to the matrix. These summaries and quotes are linked to verbatim transcript data for cross-referencing, quality assurance checks, and transparency. Once all transcripts have been coded, analysis is carried out by theme and individual responses. Coded data can be collated by case study units, if needed. Framework maintains individual narratives and allows for thematic comparison and identification of areas of convergence and dissonance adding richness to the analysis.

For this study, analysis will consider the perceived facilitators and challenges to implementation, adaptations needed to optimise delivery, and whether nursery staff think that MPT is helping to improve language and communication among the target children.

Synthesis analysis: the benefit of using a case study approach is that multi-layered analysis is possible. It allows for data triangulation and the interrogation of all data related to training and support to assess training, as well as separate analyses by respondent type (contrasting for example, the views of EY leads/managers with those of other staff).

An 'emerging good practice' summary at aggregate level will be provided to nurseries.

Our analysis will also consider any data summaries provided by Sheringham Nursery. It is likely to include summaries of ITERS data and anonymised summaries of any child level information.

No child level data will be collected by the evaluation team.

Replicating methods across all case study nurseries means that cross-site and site level data analysis will provide a comprehensive analysis of Manor Park Talks.

Ethics

At the start of the project ethical approval will be sought from NatCen's Research Ethics Committee. The anonymity of participants will be protected and no nursery, staff members or child will be identified in any outputs or reports. Whilst we will do our utmost to ensure anonymity, it may be that settings or staff are identifiable because the pilot is being conducted in only 10 nurseries which are

clustered in a small geographical area. Moreover, during the course of the evaluation staff will observe 'coaching sessions' with other nurseries as the intent of the programme is to build a network around MPT. This is an added risk to anonymity which was verbally communicated to nurseries at the start of the project.

Data protection

All data will be transferred securely and stored in a secure folder. The data will be available only to the research team for the purpose of this evaluation. Nurseries or individual staff who no longer wish to take part in the evaluation can request to have their data deleted at any point prior to the submission of the draft report.

NatCen will be the data controller and the data processor. The lawful basis for processing data is 'legitimate interest'. We will issue a privacy notice to all concerned parties and publish it on the study's webpage also (<http://www.natcen.ac.uk/media/1659732/Manor-Park-Talks-Privacy-notice-040918.pdf>). All data will be deleted six months after the end of the project.

Personnel

The evaluation will be delivered by the NatCen Children and Families team. It will be led by Fatima Husain who will be responsible for quality assurance and oversight of the project. The day to day project manager will be Sarah Morris, Senior Researcher. Sarah will be supported by Tanya Basi and Tom Bristow, Researchers.

Sheringham Nursery are delivering the intervention. Julian Grenier is leading delivery and is supported by Tracey Warden, the MPT project manager, Training will be delivered by Helen Moylett and Nancy Stewart. The coaching sessions will be facilitated by Jane Wotherspoon.

Risks

The main risks to the project, identified at the protocol, stage are set out in the table below. NatCen will maintain a risk log for the duration of the study.

Risk	Likelihood / Impact	Mitigation/Contingency
Nurseries do not engage with the research at the start of the study	Likelihood: Low	We will ensure that an MoU is in place which sets out the responsibilities of participating nurseries and includes details about the requirements of the evaluation. We will also work closely with developers to make sure that managers/EY leads are aware of the evaluation timetable and are willing to find the time to take part in interviews. The initial manager interviews will be used as an opportunity to discuss all aspect of the researcher and build a collaborative relation
	Impact: Medium	
Lack of success in gaining access to practitioners at each site	Likelihood: Low	We see this study as a collaborative effort with the developer and nursery managers/EY leads and seek buy-in from the start. We will work in a flexible way so as to accommodate staff time constraints and workloads. All members of the evaluation team have enhanced Disclosure certificates
	Impact: High	
School staff unable to find time for face-to-face interviews	Likelihood: Medium	We will take a flexible approach and in instances where a face-to-face interview is not possible, we will offer to conduct interviews by telephone and at a time suitable for the individual staff (including outside of their working hours).
	Impact: Medium	
Nurseries drop out of the pilot	Likelihood: Low	This is an intensive study of the pilot using qualitative methods. We will work closely with developers and nursery managers to manage data collection and address concerns in a timely way.
	Impact: Low	

Timeline

The table below sets out the high-level deliverables for the study.

Dates	Activity	Staff responsible/ leading
September 2018	Intervention starts	Sheringham
September 2018	Issue MoU and observe launch event	FH
October 2018	Bespoke training observations and manager interviews	SM
December 2018	Emerging findings workshop	SM, FH
Nov 18-April 19	Observation of coaching sessions	SM, PA and TB
February 2019	Case study research starts	SM, PA and
April 2019	Emerging findings workshop	SM, FH
June 2019	Intervention ends	Sheringham
June 2019	Event to review the project and plan next steps	Sheringham
June 2019	All fieldwork ends	FH
June 2019	Emerging findings workshop	SM, FH
July/Aug 2019	Early findings presented	FH
Sep/Oct 2019	Executive summary for nurseries	FH
October 2019	Draft report submitted	FH
February 2020	Final report ready for publication	FH