

Early Years Project 2015 -2016 - PELP

The Portsmouth Early Language Project (PELP) was a joint initiative between the Portsmouth Teaching School and Portsmouth City Council Early Years Advisory Team. Its aim was to increase practitioner's knowledge and confidence around supporting preschool children's language development and identifying children at risk of delay, and to have a direct impact on the language skills of children within the target groups.

Twenty seven early years settings took part in the project across the autumn and spring term 2015/16, which involved attendance at training, pre and post assessment of target children's skills, regular cluster meetings, free materials and parent workshops. A small group of target settings also received monitoring visits from members of the project team.

Data shows that the PELP had a positive impact on the practice of those taking part by helping to increase their confidence, knowledge and skills around supporting children's language development and identifying children at risk of language delay. 82% of less experienced practitioners reported increased confidence after the project and 94% of these practitioners were able to suggest appropriate strategies for supporting children's language in contrast to 52% at the start of the project.

The improvement in practice has had a direct impact on the language development of children in the target groups, with 83% or more of the children making at least the expected progress during the project across the different areas of language development, and between 59-79% of children making accelerated progress. These positive outcomes were also reflected in reports and gradings from Ofsted inspections carried out during or shortly after the project.

Areas for consideration for similar projects in the future include parental engagement, consistency of assessment and measuring the specific impact of monitoring visits.

What is the PELP?

The Portsmouth Early Language Project (PELP) was a joint initiative between the Portsmouth Teaching School and the Portsmouth City Council Early Years Advisory Team, building on the success of the ECAT (Every Child a Talker) project which was started in the city in April 2010.

The team, which consisted of an Early Years Advisory Teacher, a Speech and Language therapist and a Specialist Leader of Education (SLE) from a local nursery within a primary school, received funding for the project from the Department for Education (DfE) following a successful bid based on effective work from the pilot Early Years Hub.

The focus of the project was improving the language and communication skills of pre-school children, aged between birth and 4 years of age, with a particular focus on those in their final preschool year before starting school. The project's clearly identified impact targets focussed not only on measurable progress from the children involved, but also on increasing practitioner and parent skill to enable ongoing positive outcomes for children after the project had concluded.