

Background

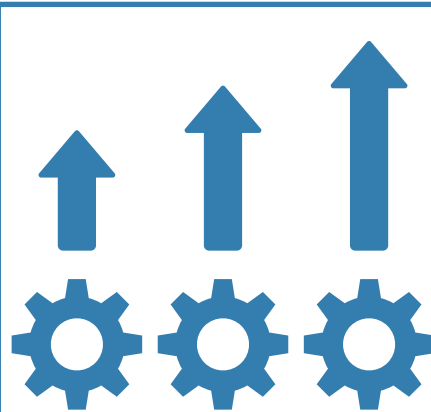
The design of the Coaching Early Conversation Interaction and Language (CECIL) Merseyside project included Everton Nursery School and Family Centre as the lead of a team of five early years professional leaders, who were also experienced coaches, to support setting staff and enable the sharing of good practice in eleven early years settings following participation in the Hanen Learning Language and Loving It training to implement the Hanen training in practice. These early years professional leaders served as coaches for the programme and were also early years practitioners who had participated in the Hanen training.

Overall, the CECIL Merseyside project included four to eight in-person coaching sessions (approximately two sessions per term) to support ongoing implementation of the Hanen approach as well as strategic language support planning within the settings. Coaches completed a coach visit form for each session and were expected to keep in touch with settings outside of sessions to respond to any ad-hoc queries.

Practitioners were expected to complete Professional Growth Records each term; these included records of self-efficacy, openness to change, knowledge of early language and pedagogy. Practitioners were also encouraged to complete the Teacher Rating of Oral Language and Literacy (TROLL) record to measure children's outcomes.

The evaluation was conducted by a research team at the Institute for Employment Studies. The central aim of the study was to examine practitioners' embedding of the Hanen training in settings in the second year following the initial training. Interviews with practitioners and senior leadership team members sought to explore the feasibility, practicality and impacts of the CECIL sustainability activities. Practitioner surveys also aimed to investigate any change over time in practitioner skills and confidence in supporting the development of children's communication and language.

Perceived impacts on practitioners, settings and children's language skills



Managers noted that the practitioners who attended the initial Hanen training were able to successfully share knowledge and strategies to other staff in their settings. Overall, managers reported that **all staff improved their understanding of how to support children's language development.**



Managers and practitioners reported that the project contributed to increased practitioner confidence, and managers mentioned that they were able to see **improved practitioner interactions with children.**



Some managers noted that there were some **increases in parental engagement**, with managers generally making more effort to engage parents.



Managers and practitioners also reported that the project had **positive impacts on children's language and communication skills.**

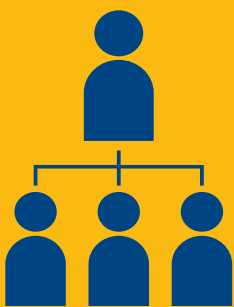
Barriers & enablers for nurseries to participating in the sustainability work



A key barrier was the lack of staff cover provided for the project. It was also sometimes difficult for coaches and practitioners to find quiet areas in the settings for the coach meetings.



Additionally, the inherent busy atmosphere of settings was reported as a barrier, contributing to difficulties in scheduling the coach meetings.

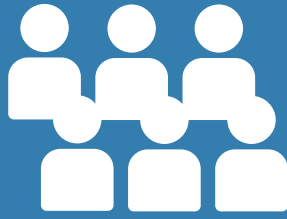


A central enabler was settings having effective leadership and management, with managers providing supportive environments for the practitioners.



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Key considerations for potential scale up and working with PVI settings



Staff cover, especially when working with PVI settings, which will allow practitioners and coaches to potentially utilise areas with fewer distractions within settings.



Face-to-face meetings, which provide coaches with a more thorough understanding of setting environments than virtual meetings.

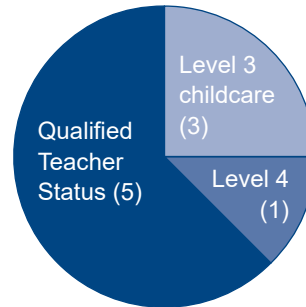


Budget and time for practitioner visits to other settings, which would provide practitioners with opportunities to observe other examples of good practice and how other settings use their classroom space.

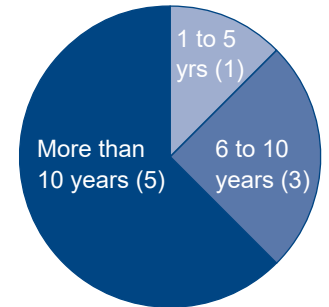
Practitioner demographics and confidence/skills

Eight practitioners completed an online survey at the beginning and end of the project, which included items about their confidence in supporting children's language development and their interactions with children.

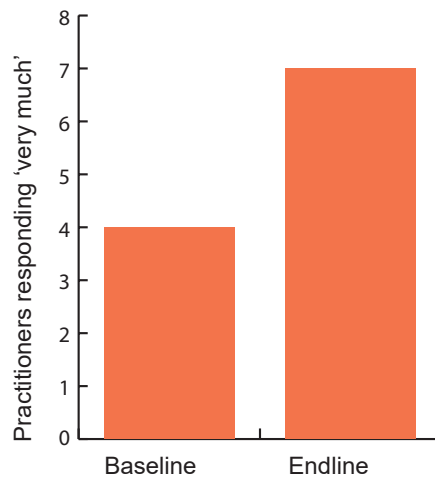
Practitioners were asked to report on their current qualification status:



How long practitioners have been working as early years professionals:

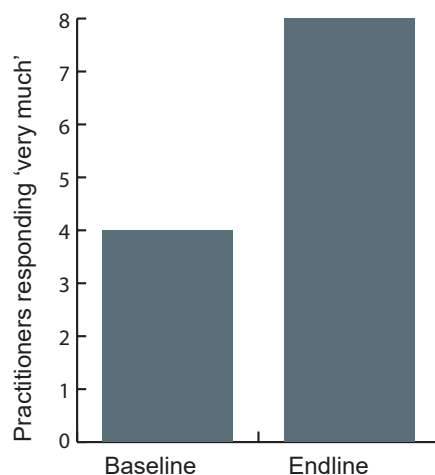


In general practitioners became more confident in supporting children's language development across time.



When asked about their confidence in helping typically developing children make good progress in their language skills, seven practitioners responded 'very much' at endline vs four responding 'very much' at baseline.

Practitioners also demonstrated improvements in their interactions with children.



When asked about how often they wait for children to start talking (with words, sounds, gestures or looks), eight practitioners responded 'very much' at endline vs four responding 'very much' at baseline.