



Department  
for Education

# **Early learning for two-year-olds: trials**

**Learning and case studies**

**June 2013**

## Early learning for two-year-olds: trials



**Blackpool Council**

BUILDING A BETTER COMMUNITY FOR ALL



**ROYAL** *borough of*  
**GREENWICH**



**Lambeth**



**CORNWALL**  
**COUNCIL**



**Kent**  
**County**  
**Council**  
kent.gov.uk



**Newcastle**  
City Council



**Lancashire**  
County  
Council



**PETERBOROUGH**  
CITY COUNCIL



**Northamptonshire**  
County Council



**Rotherham**  
Metropolitan  
Borough Council  
Where Everyone Matters

## Contents

Early learning for two-year-olds: trials	2
Contents	3
INTRODUCTION	4
Context	4
Aim of the trials	5
Selection of trial authorities	5
What were the trial authorities?	5
Learning and case studies	6
BUILDING CAPACITY	7
Mapping market position	7
Workforce development strategies	8
Children's centres	12
Flexible session times	13
Partnership and collaboration	14
Small grants scheme / capital funding	16
IMPROVING QUALITY	19
Professional development, support and training	19
Mentoring - childminders	23
Early learning for children with additional needs and vulnerable children	24
ENCOURAGING DEMAND	26
Referrals and eligibility	26
Engaging parents	30
Encouraging families yet to be engaged or who are 'hard to reach'	31
Children's centres – encouraging demand	33
Annex 1: trial overview	37

# INTRODUCTION

During 2012-13 the Department for Education (DfE) funded ten local authorities to offer early learning to those two-year-olds, within specific localities, meeting the eligibility criteria due to be introduced nationally in September 2013. The local authorities took practical steps to overcome a range of challenges around supply, quality and parental demand.

We know that delivering the early learning for two-year-olds programme will be a challenge – requiring creative and innovative solutions. Key concerns identified by local authorities included how to raise the quality of settings in sufficient numbers to provide enough places, and ensure that there were enough qualified practitioners available to work with two-year-olds. Other issues for local authorities included how to develop systems to identify and monitor eligible children and make sure that where families had cultural or attitudinal barriers to using formal early learning, they didn't miss out.

This report brings together learning from these trials. The case studies in this report show that local authorities and providers are able to develop partnerships and use a range of innovative local strategies and solutions to address capacity and sustainability for the two-year-old programme. We hope that the examples in this report can be shared more widely.

## Context

The Government is committed to strengthening families, promoting work and focusing support on improving the lives of the most vulnerable children. Over the next ten years the Government wants to see a significant increase in the supply of high quality, affordable childcare that is available at the times when parents want to use it.

All three- and four-year-olds are currently entitled to 570 hours of funded early education, usually taken as 15 hours per week over 38 weeks. From September 2013, this will be extended to reach around 20 per cent of two-year-olds. The Government aims to increase this figure to around 40 per cent from September 2014.

A statutory duty has been placed on local authorities to secure early education places for eligible two-year-olds through the Education Act 2011. Eligibility has been defined in regulations for September 2013.<sup>1</sup> These regulations state that two-year-old children will be eligible if their family meets the income and benefit criteria that are also used for free school meals or if they are looked after by their local authority.

---

<sup>1</sup> The regulations can be found at: <http://tinyurl.com/am96pfk> and, the eligibility criteria for free school meals are available here: <http://tinyurl.com/kakupxn>

The Government has allocated £291 million in 2012-13, £525 million in 2013-14 and £760 million in 2014-15 to local authorities for early learning for two-year-olds. The 2012-13 funding was allocated through the former Early Intervention Grant, which was not ring-fenced. From 2013-14 the funding is being passed to local authorities through the Dedicated Schools Grant, alongside funding for three- and four-year-old early education and for schools.

## Aim of the trials

The overall aim of the trials was to enable local authorities to test how best to deliver early learning to all eligible children in a particular geographic area or areas. The trial local authorities had the following objectives:

- stimulating growth in the local market and increasing capacity in early education settings (including with childminders and schools);
- improving and sustaining good quality early education; and,
- encouraging parental demand for the new entitlement and overcoming barriers to take-up.

This report sets out some of the work the trial authorities undertook against these three objectives. Further information from the ten trial local authorities will be available on the 'Achieving Two Year Olds' Knowledge Hub.<sup>2</sup>

## Selection of trial authorities

DfE received a very strong response when authorities across England were invited to apply for trial grant funding. Those selected were from across a range of areas with different characteristics for example urban, rural, high levels of deprivation and diverse communities.

## What were the trial authorities?

The DfE funded the following 10 local authorities: Blackpool Council, Cornwall County Council, Royal Borough of Greenwich, Kent County Council, Lambeth Council, Lancashire County Council, Newcastle City Council, Northamptonshire County Council, Peterborough City Council, and Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council.

The trials ran from September 2012 to March 2013. For an overview of each trial see **Annex 1**.

---

<sup>2</sup> <https://knowledgehub.local.gov.uk/web/achievingtwoyearolds>

## Learning and case studies

Trial authorities agreed to engage in peer learning throughout the trial and to share findings. To help promote both understanding and ownership of the trial conclusions local authorities came together at three meetings with the DfE and other trial authorities where they presented summaries of their progress and shared their learning.

Authorities were successful in establishing new and expanded provision, supporting practitioners to understand better the needs of two-year-olds and raising the quality of provision. While success, as defined by take-up levels, varied all the trials significantly increased the number of two-year-olds benefiting from funded provision. Across the trial period, over 1400 children benefited from early learning across the specific areas within the ten trial authorities. The trials have undoubtedly been a valuable part in helping shape preparation for September 2013.

DfE would like to thank the participating local authorities for their hard work during this trial, some of which is reflected in this report.

In particular the Department would like to thank: Bernie Lee, Tracey Bailey, Julia Phillips, Pam Rawling, Marcella McHugh, Phil Maltby, Ed Whitby, Carole Jones, Tim Laws and Aileen Chambers, all from participating local authorities; and Jo Pringle from Achieving Two Year Olds.

# BUILDING CAPACITY

## Mapping market position

Trial authorities told us that the first step in building capacity was to understand the existing supply and demand within the local market. Although trial authorities were at different stages in mapping provision and analysing demand and supply for their eligible two-year-olds prior to the trial the starting point was usually the annual sufficiency assessment.

### Kent – mapping predicted supply and demand

All early years providers were visited by the council's business support team. Providers completed action plans that confirmed current capacity, set out the scope for expansion and identified what would be required to aid this expansion. A mapping exercise was undertaken at a local level by analysing

data on children whose parents were in receipt of Child Tax Credit and in receipt of certain benefits. The council then approached providers in the trial areas offering support in developing new places. As a direct result of the trial, eligible two-year-olds now have access to a total of 60 new registered places offering provision to a maximum of 120 children. The council has developed 24 places at Repton

Nursery School - a new, urban community nursery, 24 places in an urban satellite expansion and 12 places by expanding a specialist rural setting for two-year-olds.



### Rotherham – mapping predicted supply and demand

Rotherham's early years team gathered occupancy levels from every day nursery, pre-school and childminder by age group (under two-year-olds; two-year-olds; three- and four-year-olds; five- to eight-year-olds). This information was then compared with registration figures to identify spare capacity. Providers were then aggregated into the areas where they were located to determine the total spare capacity. To map spare capacity against anticipated demand for September 2014, the early years team used predicted eligibility figures to model the new demand level. These comparisons showed which areas had more projected demand than available spare capacity as well as those areas where there were insufficient or no early learning providers.

### **Policy update – school registration**

The Government plans to make it easier for schools to offer early learning places by removing the requirement to register separately with Ofsted if they wish to provide places for children aged under three, thereby making it easier for schools to change their age range.<sup>3</sup>

### **Key learning**

Childcare mapping was a key first step in building capacity for two-year-old early learning:

- Identify where the projected demand is likely to be - the local authority annual sufficiency assessment is a good starting point for this.
- Work creatively with a range of providers to promote the programme and open new settings in localities to meet the expected demand.
- Build in a generous timetable for consulting with providers, parents/carers, employers and partner organisations and other local authority teams. Effective communications and consultation are essential for delivering the two-year-old programme.
- Strengthen partnerships between children's centres and other early education settings to share information and data to understand local provision and improve effective brokerage of places.

### **Policy update – information on eligible parents.**

DfE has provided local authorities with lists of potentially eligible parents to support both better marketing and capacity planning. This information will be refined and distributed to local authorities on a termly basis until the programme is fully implemented.

## **Workforce development strategies**

Several trials initiated strategies to increase the number and quality of providers delivering places for two-year-olds.

Expanding the childminder sector was a key strategy in the trial authorities. While childminders were generally receptive to the two-year-old programme, some were already working to capacity or may not have been planning to continue in the profession. Some of the challenges that local authorities had to overcome included concerns about the specific needs of eligible two-year-olds, questions over the financial benefits and worries about additional paper work.

---

<sup>3</sup> As set out in *More great childcare*  
<http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/earlylearningandchildcare/a00220847/more-great-childcare>



## Cornwall Council - childcare sector based work academy

The council worked in partnership with Jobcentre Plus to develop the academy. The academy programme offered information, training and support to enable unemployed people to work in childcare. The course ran daily from 9:30 – 3:00 for four weeks to enable candidates with school-age children to participate. All childcare costs and travel expenses were met by Jobcentre Plus.

In the first week candidates learned about different types of childcare, the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), the importance of safeguarding and visited a setting to 'see it in practice'. The Family Information Services helped candidates complete a personal profile and then contacted childcare providers in the area to arrange work experience. Further assistance with CV writing and interview skills were

offered. Course modules provided a pathway to EYFS, certified courses in basic food handling, manual handling and paediatric first aid delivered by a range of partners including the voluntary sector and Jobcentre Plus.

The academy worked on the principle that candidates were not expected to be alone with children in their care, overcoming barriers around CRB checks. Of 48 candidates the majority completed the course, 15 successfully went on to secure a job, others continued with extended work experience. Importantly, candidate feedback was very positive:

*"I loved the work experience and I definitely want to be working in childcare."* Quote from candidate.

One childminder employed a candidate from the Wadebridge Childcare sector-based academy, enabling her to provide more places:

*"I was planning to employ someone and the work experience opportunity with the Childcare Sector Work based Academy worked out really well for us all, as most of the basics were fresh from being covered within the course, a real win/win."*

### ***Why work in Childcare?***

**The childcare sector is growing fast, and there has never been a better time to consider this as work option for you**

Childcare is a varied, fun, flexible and ultimately satisfying career path for any person to undertake. Childcare includes childminding or working in a day nursery, pre-school or holiday club.

The demand for and variety of job opportunities available is remarkably high.



**Ask your advisor about participating in the Childcare Work Based Academy**

**This four week academy will offer information, training and support to enable you to work in childcare**



So, if you've often wondered whether you could make the switch and change to a career in childcare, you might be surprised at just how easy it could be.

**If you are unemployed ask about signing up today.**

### ***Why work in Childcare?***

**The childcare sector is growing fast, and there has never been a better time to consider this as work option for you**

Childcare is a varied, fun, flexible and ultimately satisfying career path for any person to undertake. Childcare includes childminding or working in a day nursery, pre-school or holiday club.

The demand for and variety of job opportunities available is remarkably high.



**Ask your advisor about participating in the Childcare Work Based Academy**

**This four week academy will offer information, training and support to enable you to work in childcare**



So, if you've often wondered whether you could make the switch and change to a career in childcare, you might be surprised at just how easy it could be.

**If you are unemployed ask about signing up today.**

### Policy update - sector-based work academies

Sector-based work academies are designed to help meet employers' immediate and future recruitment needs as well as to recruit a workforce with the right skills to sustain and grow their business. A sector-based work academy has 3 main components: pre-employment training; a work experience placement; and a guaranteed job interview. DWP will share this model with Jobcentre Plus districts across the country.

### Rotherham – attracting new childminders

A marketing strategy to inspire people to become childminders. As part of this, they created a “YouTube” style video selling the benefits of becoming a childminder through the eyes of a child. This video is available at:

<http://www.rotherhamfis.co.uk/be-a-childminder>

Changes were also made to the childminder approval and early education funding processes to reduce bureaucracy and make them more accessible for childminders. For example, the process included an additional session for childminders on promoting early learning for two-year-olds. As a result of the authority's work over the trial period, 7 potential childminders from the targeted areas began working towards Ofsted registration and there has been an increase in the number of childminders able to offer places to two-year-olds.

#### Could you be a childminder?

We are looking for people who want to work with children helping them to learn and develop.

You will be able to work from home, work hours to suit you and have a professional career where no two days are the same.



For more information either fill in the form below or ring using Rotherham Families Information Service on **0800 073 0230**

### Policy update – childminder agencies

The Government is working to put in place legislation to enable the creation of childminder agencies so that childminders can be relieved of some of the burdens of setting up their own business and can access more training and development. Agencies may also be able to help by bringing parents and childminders together. Subject to the passage of legislation, agencies will be able to register with, and be inspected by Ofsted from September 2014.

### **Policy update – apprenticeships**

From September 2013, those aspiring to a career in early education will be able to apply for a bursary worth up to £1,500, with a further £300 available for more training. Up to 1,000 bursary places will be available. The apprenticeship bursary will be a transitional scheme ahead of the early years educator qualifications in 2014. Apprentices will help support delivery of the early learning places for two-year-olds. The scheme will be administered by the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL). More information can be obtained by emailing the [NCTL apprenticeships team on ta.apprenticeship@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ta.apprenticeship@education.gsi.gov.uk). Applicants must undertake the level 3 advanced apprenticeship in children and young people's workforce to be eligible.

### **Policy update – role of local authorities consultation**

The Government has recently consulted on a series of proposals to reform the role of local authorities in early education and childcare.<sup>4</sup> The consultation closed on 6 May and the Government will set out next steps shortly.

### **Key learning**

Some childminders have found the requirements of setting up and running their own business burdensome and have welcomed the support provided by local authorities to increase the quality of their provision. To expand the number of childminder based places:

- Sign up approved childminders to a local directory of providers giving confidence to parents.
- Invite all good or outstanding childminders to offer places to two-year-olds and encourage childminders that offer places for funded three- and four-year-olds to offer places to two-year-olds.
- Recruit childminders with specialist skills for children with additional needs.
- Work in partnership with Jobcentre Plus, local colleges, the voluntary sector and other organisations to run childcare courses for unemployed people that can encourage new childcare workers into the sector.
- Provide practical support and advice to 'satisfactory' childminders to assist them in gaining an improved grading at the next inspection, for example encouraging childminders to enrol on NVQ level 3 through a local college.

---

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-proposed-changes-to-the-role-of-the-local-authority-in-early-education-and-childcare>

## Children's centres

Children's centres played a key role in the delivery of additional early learning places in the trial authorities. Children's centres were also able to increase the impact of the two-year-old programme by developing their wrap-around services and piloting more integrated health and learning developmental checks.

### **Blackpool – children's centre reconfiguration**

Talbot and Brunswick and Grange Park children's centres increased the number of two-year-olds that they could take in by reconfiguring the nursery and installing, for example, extra toilets and hand basins. Each centre increased its offer by 16 places. Two more children's centres plan to open two-year-old rooms in September 2013, providing a further 16 places each.

### **Lambeth – children's centre partnership with schools**

At Loughborough Children's Centre capacity was doubled by moving three- and four-year-olds into the local school and using the children's centre site for the delivery to two-year-olds. This created an additional 24 full time equivalent places. One of the challenges is the demand for reception places in central London. After consultation, Lambeth arranged for a school to take a larger reception class to meet demand for primary places. Working together with the leadership teams across the school, children's centre and local authority, they ensured that all available space was utilised to meet the competing demands.

### **Newcastle - integrated working increases children's centre capacity**

Following a mapping exercise, Newcastle early years team targeted their efforts on discrete geographic pockets of deprivation and children with social care plans and children from homeless families. Three children's centres were located in the 1 per cent most disadvantaged areas by these measures. Local authority staff and health visitors led on identifying, engaging and signing up parents to the two-year-old programme, working closely with the citywide project lead. As well as securing funding through the national trial to offer an additional 122 places, the local authority contributed additional funding to expand the original trial area to include all children meeting the free school meals criteria in the 5 per cent most disadvantaged areas across the whole city. Effective partnership working between the children's centres, health visitors and childcare providers has meant that 19 new providers, offering approximately 104 places, have opened since September 2012.

## **Rotherham – innovative use of rooms**

During the process of reshaping childcare provision in Rotherham, the early years team looked at the layout of rooms and the ages of children cared for in children's centres. Where the setting was capped to three children aged less than two-years-old, these children were moved from separate rooms into the room used for two-year-olds. Low level dividers separated the two age groups while sleep areas were maintained. This meant that, where previously two staff had been deployed to care for these children, now one could be used as they were in sight of other carers looking after the two-year-olds. With the two- to four-year-olds, some settings had separate rooms for the two-year-olds and the three- to four-year-olds. Sometimes each room had sessions with spare capacity and didn't match with families' needs. The use of mixed ratios and transitions between rooms helped make sure that all spare capacity could be used.

## **Key learning**

Many children's centres are on school sites and councils are looking at how to broker better links between schools with 'Outstanding' Ofsted ratings and children's centres and how to apply innovative thinking to increasing children's centre capacity.

- Evaluate staff capacity to support additional engagement and sign up of families as staff teams vary widely in terms of size, structure and professional backgrounds
- Work directly with childcare providers - including open days - at settings where children's centre staff can sign up parents with childcare providers.
- Partner with local schools to take nursery-aged children so that children's centres can free up additional places.
- Work with providers to consider how they might bring children of different ages together to make full use of available capacity – including providing some illustrative examples.

## **Flexible session times**

Securing an expansion of places requires creative and flexible approaches. Rotherham examined how to reshape the way childcare was delivered from its children's centres so that it was more targeted, more flexible and more customer-focused. They looked at flexible opening hours and staffing. After consulting parents, Greenwich also created a flexible delivery model by adding an additional two hours per day, allowing the settings to open longer. This increased the number of children who could access the two-year-old programme.



### **Rotherham – flexible opening hours**

The council worked in five geographic areas to create sufficient places to meet the expected demand for 2013. They achieved this through working with existing provision to look at reshaping their delivery model to increase capacity to deliver early learning places, focusing on increasing opening hours to a 10-hour day to enable the delivery of two 5-hour sessions per day, instead of two 3-hour sessions. As a result Rotherham increased provision across 4 of the areas by a total of 150 per cent. In the fifth area, although all of the existing providers were supportive, their accommodation was already at maximum capacity. This area was identified as a priority for capital funding and the council approached a new provider, who is currently going through planning approval.

### **Rotherham – flexible staffing**

Research identified that staffing patterns resulted in more staff than necessary to be 'in-ratio' in the middle of the day, and insufficient staff at the start and finish. Whilst insufficient staffing could be covered by the daycare manager or other staff that are normally supernumerary, these patterns were far from efficient. To address this, new staff working patterns were introduced that both reflected the new session times (more 5-hour sessions and all year round delivery), but also more closely matched the number of children present throughout the day. These shifts comprised a mixture of long (10-hour) and short days (5 or 6 hours).

### **Key learning**

For many parents childminders offer the most practical and flexible form of early education. Local authorities are also examining how settings can operate more flexibly.

- Provide places at different settings either for 15 hours per week during term times or stretched over the year providing more flexibility of choice for parents to balance family requirements.
- Encourage providers to think carefully about increasing opening hours enabling more flexibility in the hours offered - using the stretched offer has meant more available places.
- Recognise that clear planning is required to provide session times that fit with the availability of space and staff and meet parents' needs.

## **Partnership and collaboration**

Implementation of early learning for two-year-olds provides an opportunity for increased collaboration and joint ventures between local authorities, children's centres, schools and private and voluntary providers. One of the main factors in driving progress in the trial authorities was the development of effective partnerships to find innovative childcare solutions. Many authorities have worked with schools, recognising that they are in daily

contact with eligible parents. Some schools have taken on increased numbers of three-year-olds to allow the private and voluntary sector to take more two-year-olds and some are considering setting up additional early years provision on their premises.

### **Lambeth – children’s centre partnership- developing new provision**

Lambeth recognised an opportunity to use existing capital in a creative way to develop new provision. The early years team arranged for a vacant property to be leased to a high quality childcare provider within one of the estates where take-up was low. They recognised through the trial the need to ensure that services were offered locally. They helped forge a positive partnership between a new provider and the local children’s centre with the result that the children’s centre will be co-locating within the nursery on an estate where it has been hard to engage parents. The nursery will have the capacity to offer 75 FTE places for 0-5 year olds.

The approach was further developed With existing ‘One O’clock clubs’ delivered by children’s centres or childcare providers supported to offer part-time two-year-old provision in addition to the stay and play offer.

### **Lancashire – partnership working**

Children's centres focused on engaging the most vulnerable families. Lancashire promoted the offer via partner agencies including Jobcentre Plus and health and social care colleagues. They used the voluntary sector to promote the offer with specific communities and worked alongside existing high quality providers that had demonstrated a willingness to expand the number of places they offered.

### **Key learning**

The following overarching themes for building capacity have been drawn from the final reports of the trial authorities.

- Win provider ‘buy- in’ to deliver the funded places through clear communication with everyone involved - aim for a shared understanding of the early learning programme with providers.
- Understand the expertise and skills of partners; build on existing partnerships and processes and share information and data to reduce duplication of work and overlap of provision.
- Strong local authority support and challenge helped providers drive the early learning programme forward which has resulted in additional places.
- Offer local providers regular opportunities to engage and feed back, for example termly provider meeting and briefings.

- Identify capital assets across the local authority and ensure they are being used to increase capacity, especially in areas where sufficiency is a concern.

## Small grants scheme / capital funding

The Government has provided £100m of capital funding to support expansion of places. A number of trial authorities have used small grants scheme with a significant impact on increasing provision. For example, in Lancashire up to 148 additional places across 10 providers were created in 'good' or 'outstanding' settings using £70,000 for small scale works. In Peterborough the focus for the grant opportunity was on existing 'good' or 'outstanding' providers but new registrations were considered where demand required. Typically the small grants scheme was used very flexibly to:

- expand existing provision into a room or building not currently used, including vacant community space, knocking through into unused rooms or cupboards, installing partition walls to create a second room so that overall registered places could be increased;
- meet start-up revenue costs for opening mornings or afternoons where currently closed; and,
- meet costs associated with expanding the two-year-old programme, for example, recruitment, equipment and training.

In Rotherham, for areas with larger potential unmet demand the early years team looked at encouraging group provision through the use of capital funding. In contrast, Northamptonshire explored a Guaranteed Places Scheme.

### Northamptonshire – Guaranteed Places Scheme

The council explored the use of a Guaranteed Places Scheme (GPS) as a way to support sustainable growth in the early years sector. Essentially the GPS is designed to pay providers 75 per cent of the full childcare rate, in order to guarantee places for eligible two-year-old children. The aim was to minimise financial risk to providers that were increasing capacity and creating 'new' places for funded two-year-olds during this interim period. The trial used data to inform where the scheme would be offered and targeted. It used available data relating to sufficiency, availability of places and vacancies in the area, potential demand, sustainability of the setting and quality of provision to do this. Early Years providers were invited to apply and those that demonstrated they could meet suitable criteria and increase places were accepted. During the trial 24 GPS places were funded in the trial areas at group settings and the scheme has now been rolled out across the county.



### **Peterborough - small grants scheme expands places**

The small grants scheme was targeted in the trial area, with consideration given to settings within 800 metres walking distance of the boundary of the trial area. Applications were judged by a panel against weighted decision criteria that included demonstrating an ability to provide quality provision and value for money. The majority of the increase in places came from a new, 32 place pre-school which was in place and operational from September 2012. The provider was proactive in promoting the new pre-school, arranging an official opening with the Mayor and local journalists attending, leafleting local houses and businesses, and creating a roadside presence with banners advertising the service. The majority of the remaining places were also in place by September 2012. By the end of the trial the target of 70 new places was almost doubled.

### **Rotherham – capital scheme expands settings**

Rotherham estimated that by September 2014, of the predicted 1700 two-year-olds eligible for early education, around 938 could be unable to access a place due to lack of capacity. The first step in building capacity was to identify where the projected demand was likely to be. Rotherham Childcare Sufficiency Analysis using face-to-face and email consultation with providers showed that existing childcare providers did not have sufficient capacity to provide enough places to meet the entitlement. To improve capacity, the council is planning to allocate capital funding at a maximum of £480 per new place created and have invited funding applications from existing and new providers. The level of funding is directly related to the number of eligible children who will benefit. The application process will ensure that only providers who demonstrate they can deliver good quality, accessible, sustainable childcare will be funded. This approach ensures that funding follows the child, will encourage creative and effective solutions from providers and enable relatively simple budget monitoring where value for money can be demonstrated.

### **Peterborough – small grants case study.**

When considering whether to award small grants, Peterborough took into account the following stated intentions from settings involved:

- work closely with a childcare advisers to undertake an assessment of key improvements required;
- feed back to the local authority on the challenges and successes of the project;
- supply on request accurate records of costs;
- support the local authority to establish the 'return on investment' over the trial period by providing details of income and expenditure directly relating to two-year-old places;

- provide evidence of how the setting will promote the take-up of early education to economically disadvantaged families;
- provide greater flexibility in session timings, for example delivering five-hour and three-hour sessions in the mornings and afternoons respectively.

### **Key learning**

Small grant funding can help build the number of places, but where the number of childcare providers is low then it may not be sufficient to provide enough additional places and larger-scale capital funding schemes should be considered:

- Focus small grant funding on settings within walking distance of target areas where possible.
- Prepare for building work to take longer than expected, especially if planning applications and capital investment are required.
- Plan liaison strategy with parents, relocation of children during refurbishment, and interim staff to cover training days.
- Set clear conditions and criteria for the grant.

# IMPROVING QUALITY

## Professional development, support and training

Trial authorities explored how to improve the practice of early years practitioners and childminders by encouraging them to take up additional training, access support from their local authority or work closely with a professional organisation to increase the number of places and improve quality. For example, as part of a programme of improvement offered to rural childminders in Kent, one childminder made a number of small practical improvements to her practice which significantly raised the quality of her service and she is now able to accept funded two-year-old children.

Local authorities consulted childminders, then put in place training designed to improve practitioner skills and knowledge of vulnerable families and help them recap or refresh their knowledge and improve practice. Some childminders particularly welcomed the availability of on-line quality improvement support, which could be accessed flexibly at a time of their own choosing. Where face to face training was offered, participants appreciated the opportunity to discuss ideas with other colleagues from a variety of settings.

### **Blackpool – training for providers delivering to two-year-olds**

Blackpool developed a training course for all providers planning on delivering two-year-old funded places. The course (which was the equivalent of five days training) was designed to inform and engage childcare workers in two-year-old child development, provide tips for observation, assessment, and working with parents. Following positive results the council facilitated additional training to support settings providing for vulnerable children and families. Feedback has been positive. *‘The training which the local authority has put on for providers has been beneficial to us as a setting. As manager I have cascaded all training information down to staff during our staff meetings. This has facilitated us further in extending knowledge and understanding in specific areas. Practitioners have now embraced this training and feel much more equipped to support the needs of these children and their families’* Quote from a faith-based voluntary managed preschool

### **Greenwich – training through children’s centres**

The council designed and commissioned training courses for providers. The training, ‘Being Two’, focused on two-year-olds and strengthening understanding of vulnerable families and the pressures on their lives. The training was delivered at times and places convenient for the participants. Children’s centres hosted Saturday meetings, training and sessions for childminders at a model ‘classroom’ with a focus on practical and cost effective approaches to resources for supporting age-appropriate development.

## Kent – childminding pathway in rural wards

Using a paper based initial audit and visits from a Quality Improvement Partner, childminders received support to reflect on their practice as well as a written action plan to enable them to make improvements. Continuing support was offered throughout the trial, with some childminders accessing more support than others depending upon their starting point and existing knowledge. By the end of the trial, an additional nine childminders had signed up to deliver places for two-year-olds and another two were in the process of doing so.

## Kent – online training

A childminder had been registered since 2000 but was not taking any two-year-olds. Prompted by the council the childminder signed up to use a series of online tools designed to prompt self-evaluation to improve her practice. *“I found it very positive as it put me back on track; I now feel this has put the professionalism back in my role.”* As a result of completing the tool kit she created an Action Plan and:

- registered to take funded two-year-olds;
- made amendments to her settling-in review, annual review and questionnaire to capture the views of the child;
- created business cards allowing her to promote her services more professionally;
- promoted her business through gifts for the children who were leaving her care, for instance teddy bears wearing t-shirts with her business logo on them;
- established links with her local children’s centre and directed parents to the services they offered.

### Welcome to Kent Early Years and Childcare CPD Online

Professional development and training for Kent Children's workforce

## Kent – Treasure Chest Library

Kent early years team supported childminders to improve their practice by offering access to a centrally managed treasure chest library and inviting them to select any five items. The library included a range of items such as activity trays and framed mirror sets. The treasure chest was awarded free of charge to all Ashford pilot participants for one year. The treasure chest learning resources together with professional support has helped childminders in the trial areas improve the quality of their settings. One childminder commented: *“These items encourage children to explore their environment, and promote a positive attitude to learning, for instance, going outside to play even if they get a bit muddy and wet, or challenging their fears to get their hands messy, or touch unfamiliar materials.”*



### **Lancashire – children’s centre training**

The council offered training to all providers of early learning places for two-year-olds through their children’s centres. Cluster moderation meetings were developed giving practitioners the opportunity to discuss any learning and/or issues regarding implementation of the EYFS with their peers and consultant teachers. This helped to improve consistency in the way that children were assessed and tracked between settings and provided a focus on the development opportunities for children with additional needs when planning sessions.

### **Northamptonshire – Striving for Quality training**

The council delivered quality improvement training for two-year-olds called *Striving for Quality* which included attending network meetings for leaders / owners / chairs of governors and managers of early years settings. Providers in Wellingborough were the first group to receive this training, followed by other areas of the county. In total 50 settings across the county were engaged in the training and gave positive feedback. The success of this training was subsequently reflected in improved Ofsted ratings in the settings involved.

### **Peterborough – accessing a NDNA on-line course**

Two members of staff from each setting in receipt of funding from Peterborough’s Small Grants Scheme were given the opportunity to access a National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA) online course “Supporting two-year-olds in the EYFS”. Whilst key learning from this training was beneficial to those who accessed it, the main purpose of providing such training was to evaluate how the sector responded to online training. Of those who accessed it, feedback was positive, particularly about the ease of such training tools which complement face-to-face training and interaction, along with the benefits of being able to access them on demand. Elements of the course may be taken forward to add to the continuing training programme for practitioners in Peterborough

### **Rotherham – Toddler Room Project**

The Toddler Room Project (Life at Two) was developed to support settings with children and families accessing the two-year-old early learning places in the trial areas. Training covered discussion on brain development, attachment theory and working with vulnerable families. Following positive feedback the training was expanded to providers outside the trial areas. Trainers sat with providers with a mixture of Ofsted judgments: outstanding, good and satisfactory - this gave a good balance to the discussions and helped practitioners learn from each other. After each training session practitioners undertook a task to identify improvements. Over the trial period a total of 33 practitioners and managers attended. Feedback was very positive and participants provided evidence

of changes they had made. One nursery for example, reported that: “*outdoor play was improved beyond recognition (which was commented on by Ofsted as an outstanding element of provision).*”

## **Key learning**

Many practitioners will need to review and update their skills and knowledge, whether through pursuing formal qualifications or through regular continuing professional development to deliver the early learning for two-year-olds programme.

- Base planning on consultation with practitioners and managers on training they would like to support or buy in and what additional help they would like to develop for their staff.
- Combine training with offers of practical support. For example, in Peterborough the Birth to Three pedagogue team also helped providers to create an action plan to address areas of improvement which was completed as part of the training course.
- Encourage children’s centre staff to take up training to improve parental involvement in their children’s learning courses by providing targeted ‘stay and play’ sessions for parents of two-year-olds.
- Invest in qualifications and leadership courses for children’s centre staff - for example supporting staff into level 3 qualifications and leadership training.
- Offer childminders one-to-one support and help with writing action plans to enable them to make improvements and become more confident in expanding their business.
- Consider flexible ways to offer training to childminders, such as:
  - Saturday meetings;
  - Induction and support evenings; and,
  - Online tools and support.
- Encourage and facilitate more peer support opportunities. Childminder networks may have a particularly positive impact in rural areas because they address isolation and strengthen the links between childminders, other childcare providers and family support services.
- Establish and develop links between children’s centres and childminders by including childminders in play sessions and provide practical help in building profiles of each childminder to make a portfolio to share with parents.

## Mentoring - childminders

Trial authorities found that mentoring or buddying was a very successful approach in delivering additional places. Early years teams developed mentoring schemes for newly registered or satisfactory childminders to help improve their Ofsted grade at the next inspection. In addition, childminders were encouraged to join networks and work towards continuous improvement. 'Good' or 'Outstanding' Ofsted childminders were selected as mentors based on their good working practices as well as their commitment and willingness to work closely with childminders.

The trial authorities overwhelmingly reported that childminders appreciated mentoring based upon working friendships that were already in place and where they were able to access personalised support. They welcomed the opportunity to meet, learn, share their experiences and work together within their geographical area. In particular mentees found it useful to visit their mentor childminder to see how good practice could be put into reality. Childminders also welcomed the flexibility mentoring provided with support being delivered in a variety of ways such as by phone, through text, face-to-face or via e-mail.

### Cornwall – mentoring programme

Childminder mentors were identified by Cornwall's Childminder Network Coordinators who work with, and know the childminder sector very well. They quickly identified a range of childminders in a geographical area where similar issues were being experienced, for example where policies needed to be improved, and identified a childminder mentor within the sector who could offer exemplary practice. The mentor contacted the mentees to agree convenient times to get together. This has had excellent results so far and several childminders have received improved Ofsted ratings enabling more places to be filled with funded two-year-olds.

*"I found that going over the paperwork with my mentor was very useful and reassuring. I haven't had under 5s for a few years and it was good to refresh myself with the help and input from her. I now feel confident to start implementing the new EYFS with the new younger children that will be starting with me shortly."* Quote from a mentee – Cornwall

*"I am aiming to start up a childminding network which will enable us to support one another in the future."* Quote from a mentor – Cornwall

### Lambeth – mentoring programme

Lambeth identified all the Good and Outstanding childminders in the trial area and offered a tailored mentoring programme from the National Children's Bureau (NCB). They trained twenty childminders and recruited four additional childminders to the childminding network in the trial area. They developed a framework to support the mentoring process and to ensure both mentors and mentees were clear about roles and responsibilities.

## **Key learning**

For both newly qualified practitioners starting in their first employment and for existing childminders, local authorities explored how mentoring could support childminders, raise the quality of settings and increase the number of places.

- Develop and work closely with childminding networks to identify suitable childminders and to deliver a package of professional development and support.
- Consider recruiting children's centre teachers and childcare development officers to provide support to childminders at children's centres.
- Feedback to the mentee in writing is essential – make sure mentors provide observation, assessment and recommendation.
- Ensure a clear process is in place so that everyone is informed about roles and responsibilities and that targets are met.

## **Early learning for children with additional needs and vulnerable children**

A number of trial authorities examined how early learning for two-year-olds could be co-ordinated with strategies to support vulnerable children and looked at ways to help parents support their child's learning in the home.

### **Greenwich – stay and play**

Greenwich provided training for children's centre staff in the Parent Involvement in their Children's Learning (PICL) and 'Growing Together' courses. The training model is being adapted for staff to provide a new targeted 'stay and play' session for parents of two-year-olds in funded places. Staff will use these sessions to strengthen parental understanding of the EYFS framework and capacity to provide home learning environments that support children's learning and development.

### **Kent – Every Child a Talker initiative**

Two new childcare settings agreed to take part in the Every Child a Talker (ECAT) initiative. Staff were offered peer support to improve their interactions with the children and offered additional training. As a result the settings had more purposeful activity, reduced levels of noise and a pervading air of calm reassurance, resulting in the children feeling emotionally secure when at the nursery. Both settings engaged parents in learning songs, rhymes and using bedtime story bags. Tracking showed that the number of children 'at risk of speech delay' had significantly declined.



### **Policy update – Early Language Development Programme (ELDP)<sup>5</sup>**

The ELDP is a three-year programme funded by the DfE until March 2014. In early 2012 the Early Language Development programme began to build upon the infrastructures created by the Every Child a Talker (ECAT) programme and it is now extending and embedding the principles of the ECAT programme across children's centres in England.

### **Lambeth – PEAL training**

Practitioners and Parent Champions were invited to participate in PEAL (Parents, Early Years and Learning) training. PEAL supports all those who work in children's centres, early years settings and services to work effectively with parents to enhance children's early learning and development. The training has been very successful and will be rolled out across the borough. Parents and practitioners are being trained to deliver the programme to other settings which helps build capacity and support sustainability.

### **Peterborough – childcare and health visitors**

Two settings took part in a local pilot, which was run by the early years childcare intervention service and the health visiting team to build closer links between the health team and settings by examining the two-year-old progress checks and sharing information. Health visitors and children's centre staff work in collaboration with the early years setting to ensure parents can have a face-to-face meeting with health staff if requested. If any developmental concerns or home issues are raised by the parents or by the early years setting the health visitor is informed and a follow-up home visit arranged. The health team provided training on the 'Ages and Stages' questionnaire that is used to support the two-year-old check as part of the Healthy Child programme. This initiative is now being tested in another area of the authority.

### **Key learning**

By adapting existing training and working closely across different professions local authorities were able to strengthen the support given to families and meet the childcare needs of vulnerable children.

- Adapt training about working with vulnerable children to the skill set and experience of practitioners by drawing on feedback as you go along.
- Build in opportunities to identify wider family needs - in Newcastle, children's centre and others who identified children for the early learning places also identified additional needs using the Common Assessment Framework (CAF).
- Work closely with social workers to put systems in place to ensure the needs of looked after children are considered on a case by case basis.

---

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.ican.org.uk/eldp>

# ENCOURAGING DEMAND

## Referrals and eligibility

As the number of two-year-olds entitled to an early learning place increases, tightly managed referral systems may no longer be appropriate or manageable. Trial authorities therefore developed self-referral systems and external marketing materials to encourage parents to self-refer.

Nevertheless health visitors, children's centres, family support workers, women's refuges and social workers all helped to identify children eligible for the early learning places and make applications with parents.

### Northamptonshire – On-line Eligibility Checker (OEC)

The council worked with Local Government Shared Services to develop an On-line Eligibility Checker (OEC) which linked with DfE's Eligibility Checking Service (ECS). The OEC issues families with a unique reference number which they take to their chosen early years provider along with the child's birth certificate and a recent utility bill (the same documents required for establishing eligibility for the universal three- and four-year-old entitlement). To support tracking and audit purposes, providers include the child's reference number in their subsequent funding claims. The OEC is easy to use and provides an instant response while reducing the administrative process for the local authority.



The OEC was piloted within the trial area and after the initial trial period, OEC was launched across the county. Feedback from users of OEC demonstrated that the role of children's centres and 'word of mouth' were significant factors in raising the profile of the early learning programme.

## Blackpool – introduction of a self-referral system

Blackpool had an established referral process relying mainly on health visitors, but also a number of other partners such as children's centres, family support workers, women's refuges and social workers to identify eligible children and make applications with the parent, on behalf of their child. The introduction of national eligibility criteria required two additions to the Blackpool referral process.

The two additions were:

- the introduction of a self-referral mechanism for parents whereby they could check eligibility via the on-line Eligibility Checking Service by contacting the early years team, and,
- the development of external marketing materials for parents to encourage them to self-refer, as opposed to the materials provided to partners that had been used previously.

## Peterborough – textback

The council commissioned a 'textback' service to offer parents an easy way to check if their child was eligible for place. The service was attractive to many parents who otherwise might not have engaged through traditional methods. It also reduced telephone enquiries and was able to respond to parents more quickly than the traditional application form.

The introduction of the textback process was promoted through flyers, postcards, and website advertisements designed to encourage take-up of the scheme. Disclaimers were included on all promotional tools to ensure that parents understood that they were giving consent for their information to be shared and processed through the Eligibility Checking Service (ECS), alongside information about cost. See flow chart below for process description.

During the trial period a total of 133 enquiries were received, 27 per cent of which resulted in a positive return from the ECS. The active use of textback has led to this

**Free** childcare for  
**TWO**  
*is changing!*

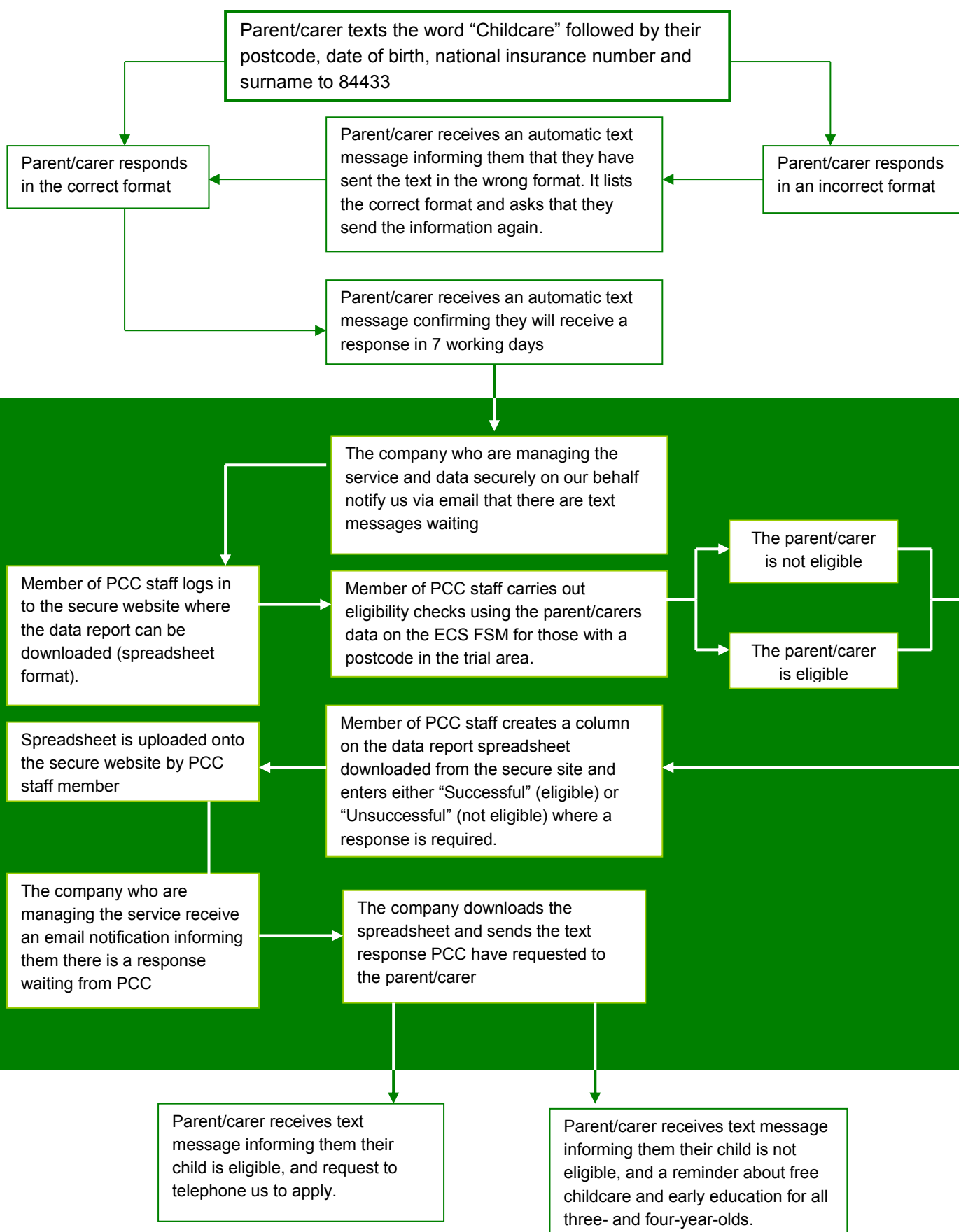
*if you live in Paston, North Bretton or  
Walton your two-year-old child may  
qualify for the extended scheme for  
free childcare.*

Visit the website to find out more:  
[www.peterborough.gov.uk/  
FreeforTwos](http://www.peterborough.gov.uk/FreeforTwos)

**PETERBOROUGH**  
  
CITY COUNCIL

service being commissioned after the introduction of national eligibility criteria from September 2013.

## Peterborough textback service



## **Blackpool – looked after children**

There were concerns within the council that looked after children would be better placed developing a relationship with a primary caregiver to help promote their social and emotional development rather than attending nursery. Meetings were held between the early years team and the social care team responsible for looked after children. It was agreed within the council that all eligible looked after children would be sent an offer letter once they reached two years old, via their social worker, rather than a direct approach to the child's foster parent. This meant the child's social worker could instigate a discussion around accessing a nursery place at the appropriate time in the child's development - making sure that the nursery could provide for any additional needs the child may have. The early years team were also able to access the social care management information system, which identified looked after children when they become of eligible age and provided the contact details of the child's named social worker.

### **Key learning**

Use a variety of approaches to reach parents, recognising that they will access information in different ways: An online eligibility checker provides a method of engaging parents who might be hard to reach through traditional methods families can be helped to access the OEC and take-up can be increased by providing practical support through children's centres and other agencies (e.g. by including libraries). Promote the checker in other marketing materials such as posters, postcards and banners.

- Consider communicating the offer through plasma screens in, for example children's centres and libraries, and promotional posters placed in housing blocks, local radio advertising, newsletters and bulletins posted to registered families;
- Provide schools with key messages about the two-year-old programme to include in their newsletters or by providing material on posters or leaflets so that parents with older children are made aware of the programme.
- Double check that families identified as ineligible should be considered as a standard part of local processes, to ensure that changes of circumstance are picked up between any initial enquiry and a subsequent check.
- Inform partners, for example health visitors, about early learning so that they are aware of the eligibility criteria and can support take-up.
- Focus on stimulating interest and providing information about where to find out more - it is difficult to include all the necessary information on a leaflet.
- Remember that not everyone has access to the internet – printed booklets with application forms distributed in childcare settings, doctors' surgeries and libraries help reach families who are not online.

## Engaging parents

Families were overwhelmingly positive about their experience with the early learning programme. Parents noted distinct benefits to their children since attending nursery. Their children seemed more confident, more sociable and “*on top of things*”:

*“My son’s vocabulary is really coming along. He is counting out loud and singing nursery songs...He is really shining at the moment and picking up on everything.”* Parent, Kent

Many also welcomed the chance to meet other parents or take up learning opportunities.

Parents typically found out about the early learning programme from friends, Jobcentre Plus, nurseries and children’s centres. Word of mouth is central to building trust and should not be underestimated. Parents also appreciated a straightforward registration process. Both being clear about the information they had to provide and sometimes having help to fill out the paperwork on their behalf, had positive results. However, not all parents of eligible two-year-olds took up offers of a funded place. The main reasons identified were:

- Parents preferring to keep the child at home with them: *‘Why would I want my child to be in another person’s home when I am at home and able to care for them?’*
- Stigma or a cultural resistance to childcare - a belief that the mother should be doing the caring or that aged two is too young for childcare.
- No available space at preferred setting or lack of an eligible setting in family’s own community.
- Transient population – families moving out of the area or a change in circumstances.
- Parents not having the information to hand about how good childminding can be.
- The perception that childminders were less well qualified than nursery staff and provided a lower quality of care compared to nurseries.
- Families who were offered a free place for their child in an area more affluent than their own finding it intimidating and off-putting.

### **Kent – Free for 2 (FF2) scheme**

To help promote the FF2 scheme, Kent produced a short presentation for families to view in the reception area of children’s centres. The presentation is also available as a handout which can be taken away and referred to at a later date. Another version is being produced for early years providers to show to parents on digital display screens in their settings. This work forms part of Kent’s marketing strategy to help ensure more families are aware of the funding.



## Key learning

Some parents are not persuaded that early learning can benefit their children.

- Understand why parents do not take up the place they are offered – this is important to inform sufficiency planning and marketing plans.
- Support parents to understand the benefits of using childminders.
- Marketing strategies and promotional campaigns should be complemented by continuing targeted support and referral where required.
- Awareness days with children's centre and childminders in communities where there is evidence of lack of take-up of three- and four-year-old funded places or where eligibility levels are high may help parents understand what is being provided.

## Encouraging families yet to be engaged or who are 'hard to reach'

In some areas the take-up of the two-year-old programme was sometimes much lower than expected, despite publicity and targeted outreach. In particular, trial authorities found that some BME and East European families were less likely to take up early learning places. Key reasons were traditional notions of the mother and childcare in those communities and a lack of an established relationship with childcare providers within specific communities.

### Lancashire – taking the offer to BME groups

When faced with low take-up of early learning places by BME groups, Lancashire set up a service level agreement with a small, voluntary organisation with good links to the BME community in Preston. It provided 62 families with information about the programme. An interpreter shared the message with the families whilst the voluntary organisation's workers provided a crèche. The result of this outreach support was that the families were interested in the benefits it would bring to their children and wanted to take up the offer.

Information coming from a trusted source (the local authority via the voluntary organisation) was key to this success. Parents were supported with information on the eligibility criteria, how to find out if they were eligible and which settings were delivering the offer.

Members of staff at the voluntary organisation were able to provide families with relevant information and to support families in accessing early learning places. Take-up from within the BME community is now increasing.

### **Cornwall – a new setting**

In Cornwall, the council invited applications for a new good or outstanding provider to set up in a community centre on a local estate. The setting was developed in partnership with the children's centre, residents' association, Jobcentre Plus and other local initiatives. The setting offered childcare placements and qualification progression to interested residents. To promote the new setting and reach the most vulnerable families, the children's centre hosted a fun day for parents to meet childcare providers. There was a fun bus for soft play, a magician and balloon modelling, face painting and an area where parents could discuss childcare and work. Initially three families signed up for early learning places and information on three- and four-year-old funding distributed. The children's centre registered parents and directed others to sector-based work academies.



### **Newcastle – building trust with the Roma community**

Drop-in sessions at the Riverside Community Health Project addressed particular issues affecting the Roma community including a lack of knowledge about how to access services. Many parents sought support about parenting issues, in particular on advice relating to the supervision of children, for example: setting boundaries and school attendance. Information on free school meals and accessing early learning places is provided. The sessions have helped build trust between women from the Roma community and workers at Riverside Project. This has enabled the workers to support some women to visit local childcare settings and access early learning placements. Riverside Community Health Project is also developing a childcare facility to meet the needs of vulnerable families who live locally.



## Lambeth – recruiting Parent Champions

In order to ensure that the most vulnerable parents from the diverse community were reached, Lambeth recruited and trained parent champions from the locality. Working with the Daycare Trust model, parents were identified by local providers and children's centres. A development programme was planned with PEAL (Parents, Early Years and Learning) and Daycare Trust and included safeguarding awareness and becoming a parent champion. The parent champions are ambassadors for early learning, supporting the local authority with recruitment events. They are involved in training providers with both PEAL and parent participation and have a role in feeding back the views of local parents to the local authority.<sup>6</sup>

### Key learning

Understanding how parents in different parts of the community get information is crucial

- Partner with voluntary organisations that are trusted by communities to raise the profile of the early learning programme.
- Disseminate information to professionals working within the community, such as health visitors and social workers, through network meetings, regular briefings and by attending their meetings.
- Look at the wider needs of disadvantaged families and integrate help with childcare with family support services such as information on free school meals.
- Simplify application forms, reduce paperwork and provide help for parents completing forms.
- Co-production with local parents especially in areas where take-up is low will support local authorities to ensure that delivery is meeting the local needs.

## Children's centres – encouraging demand

In the trial authorities, children's centres played a vital role in expanding the numbers of places for two-year-olds and encouraging demand. Greenwich, for example designed the trial with children's centres at the heart of their approach. Children's centres not only offer early learning places themselves, but were crucial in hosting and organising outreach events, providing the expertise for registering children and tracking their progress. Children's centre staff members were often well placed to persevere and gain the trust of families.

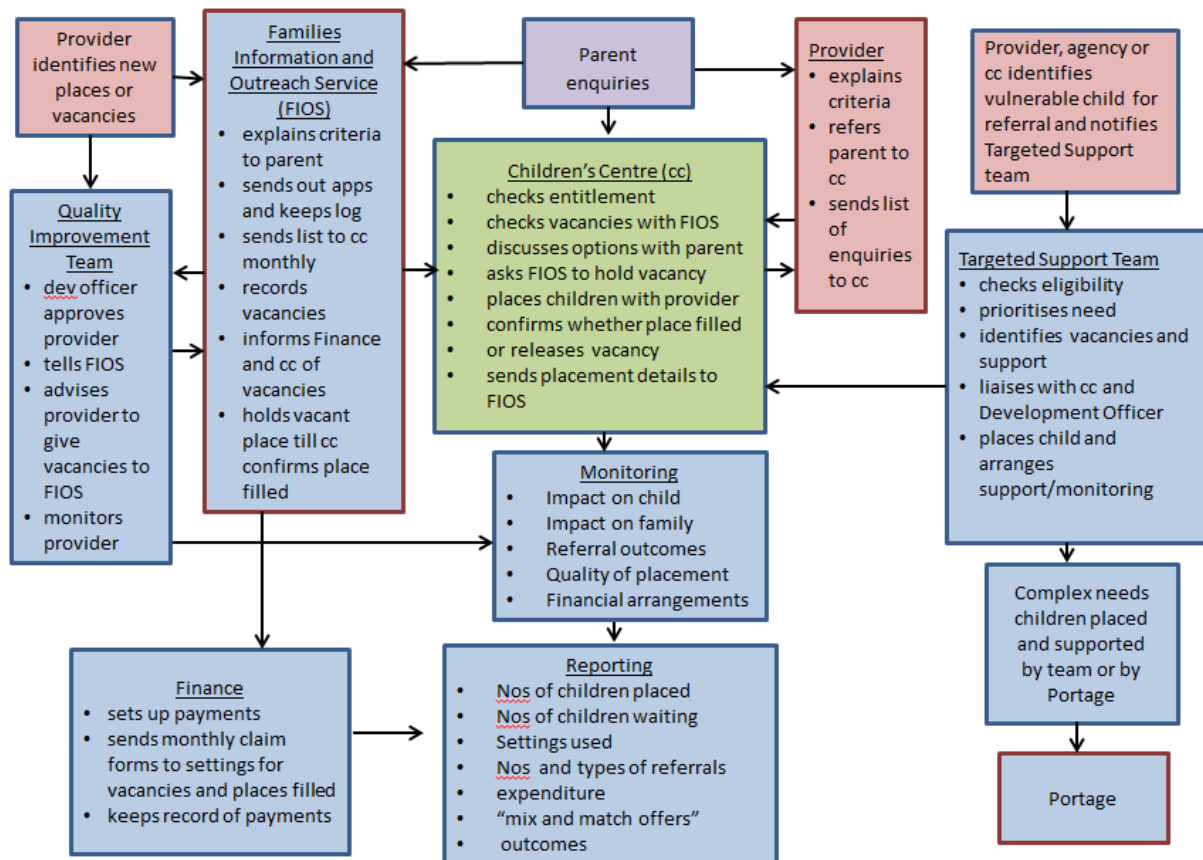
*'Staff members were very keen to support Mum. It was apparent that she was dealing with a difficult and stressful situation. However we learned that it was not possible to provide this support initially. It took time for Mum and then Dad to*

---

<sup>6</sup> The Daycare Trust has recently merged with the Family and Parenting Institute and changed its name to the Family and Childcare Trust.

*feel able to trust in staff and work with us. Consistent availability and welcoming to sessions enabled this. We felt it was important for us to appear supportive but not too forceful during this period. The two-year-old place gave practitioners the opportunity to observe the child, implement interventions and work with parents to identify concerns and actions whilst building relationships with and supporting the parents through difficult issues.’ Children’s centre staff - Greenwich*

Graphic showing Greenwich children’s centre referral and targeted support system



## Rotherham – promotional campaign

In order to increase awareness and take-up and to help identify eligible families, promotional leaflets were produced and disseminated via the children’s centre network and communications were sent to health visitors, social workers, voluntary sector organisations and childcare providers. The Families Information Service in Rotherham carried out the eligibility check. This led to a significant increase in take-up of the early learning programme borough-wide and in targeted areas in the spring term.

## **Blackpool – children’s centre outreach**

Children’s centre managers were sent a spreadsheet showing all the children in their reach area who had been identified as eligible for a place. Outreach workers followed up the family to identify a suitable place or a referral was made to the Family Information Service for assistance. Outreach workers answered questions and resolved any difficulties with the application. The children’s centre tracked whether the place was taken up and if attendance continued. By using this process as a means of registering families with the children’s centre, other issues that could require early intervention were identified.

### **Key learning**

Many authorities have placed children’s centres at the heart of their two-year-old programme.

- Children’s centres are well placed to:
  - Strengthen partnerships with other settings to deliver more effective brokerage of places.
  - Work with particular communities and undertake targeted outreach, writing to all parents registered and following up with phone calls and door to door visits.
  - Share information on take-up of places within the reach area and feed back to the early years teams - tracking families in this way not only encourages take-up, but also increases children’s centre registration.
  - Include childminders as part of the children’s centre team and make sure there are opportunities for parents to observe childminders in centre-based activities.
  - Arrange visits to childcare providers and drop-in sessions for parents in different venues.
  - Encourage parents to engage in child development courses and joint parent and child activities.
  - Embed early learning with integrated early childhood services.
  - Support parents through the application process.
  - Strengthen parental understanding of childminding by encouraging visits to a childminders home and encourage parental partnership with settings through home visits.
  - Communicate the programme to parents by including the value of early learning and promote childminding as a positive choice.

- Target the Family Information Service outreach and brokerage service to areas of low take-up.
- Support parents who are not entitled to the two-year-old programme by directing families to universal services within children's centres and other relevant information on childcare.
- Arrange and host training, for example parent champions, to help engage 'hard to reach' families.

## Annex 1: trial overview

Local Authority Trial Areas	Trial overview
<b>Blackpool:</b> Grange Park, Talbot and Brunswick	<p>The trial was intended to offer all eligible two-year-olds within three of Blackpool's most deprived wards a free early education place as well as make available a place for all looked after children in the LA. The trial would create 125 extra places. Additional places would be provided by filling places that were vacant in existing settings and working with existing providers including childminders.</p> <p>To improve the quality of places the trial would include a training course for all settings and childminders wishing to receive grant funding.</p>
<b>Cornwall:</b> North Cornwall including Bodmin, Bude and Launceston; St Tudy and St Mabyn in North Cornwall; St Austell and China Clay area; Pengegon Estate in Camborne; Treneere Estate in Penzance	<p>The proposal covered a number of distinct areas across Cornwall including rural areas in the north of the county. The trial would look to create an additional 67 places.</p> <p>The proposal intended to increase capacity by: working with Jobcentre Plus to establish sector specific work based academies for people to enter the childcare sector; establishing a childminder buddying service to reduce the number of childminders who drop out of the market; and establishing a rural federation of childcare providers. It would also look to improve take-up and confidence in childminder provision.</p>
<b>Greenwich:</b> Abbey Wood and Thamesmead Moorings	<p>In these two adjoining wards, take-up of the free entitlement for three-and four-year-olds was lower than the borough average and the population was growing. Along with free school meals and looked after children, places would also be offered to those in families experiencing domestic violence, children in need and those with child protection plans. The trial would create an additional 130 places.</p> <p>Capacity would expand through running the offer in some settings over the full year and not just term time, adding new places (e.g. extended opening) and recruitment of specialist childminders and Portage practitioners for children with additional needs.</p> <p>Quality would be improved through a training programme with a focus on working with vulnerable families and for childminders.</p>
<b>Kent:</b> Ashford	<p>The Ashford district encompasses a mix of small, urban, deprived wards and large, rural wards with low population density. The trial would create an additional 61 places. The authority proposed to establish new places in a community nursery within a new housing development and introduce a rural peer childminding service.</p> <p>A mapping exercise of existing provision would be carried out</p>

	and existing providers supported through business planning, legislation, environment and marketing workshops and action plans developed to support expansion.
<b>Lambeth:</b> Coldharbour	<p>The Coldharbour ward was selected on the basis of high deprivation and provision which varied in quality. The trial would create an additional 106 places.</p> <p>Capacity would be improved through tendering for new provision in a vacant nursery, expanding children's centre capacity and recruitment of childminders.</p> <p>The trial would also train parent champions to work with local parents to co-produce an offer to meet the needs of the community. Training would include NCB's Parents as Partners in Early Learning.</p>
<b>Lancashire:</b> Preston	<p>All eligible children in Preston would be able to access a place, with the authority also funding places for children with additional needs, traveller children and children of serving army personnel. The trial would create an additional 159 places.</p> <p>Increasing capacity would be focused on existing providers and based on the provision of business advice, transitional funding to resource in-setting changes, support for high quality providers to expand into additional premises and increased access to the local childminder network to support quality improvement.</p> <p>Take-up would be targeted through work with practitioners, childminders and children's centres with a focus on the BME community.</p>
<b>Newcastle:</b> East and Fossway, and Westgate	<p>This proposal would target all two-year-olds living in the reach of the two most disadvantaged children's centres. The trial aimed to create an additional 122 places.</p> <p>Proposals included an audit of current provision and work with childminders and settings to identify and resolve issues and challenges found. It would consider transport routes to childcare provision, working with schools and parents to identify barriers to take-up, and specific outreach designed to target the BME community, especially in cases where English is an additional language.</p>
<b>Northamptonshire:</b> Wellingborough	Wellingborough comprises both urban and rural communities. The trial would create an additional 80 places. The authority would establish a "Guaranteed Places Scheme" by which providers would be guaranteed funding for at least a year to deliver an agreed number of places (filled or unfilled) providing time and reassurance to invest in expansion.
<b>Peterborough:</b> Paston, Walton & North Bretton	The area selected experienced above average deprivation. In addition to children meeting the criteria for free school meals, and looked after children the proposal would also target children on the edge of care and gypsy and traveller children.

	<p>The trial would create 58 places.</p> <p>The proposal included a small grants scheme to PVI settings, reviewing childminder network arrangements and the use of children's centre capacity by existing providers.</p> <p>Quality would be supported through a two-year-old focused training programme and take-up improved through a volunteer/community champion outreach programme along with local authority marketing.</p>
<p><b>Rotherham:</b> Arnold, Coleridge, Thrybergh/Dalton, Park View, Swinton Brookfield</p>	<p>The trial would operate in five children's centre areas which have to extend their capacity. The trial would deliver an additional 89 early education places for two-year-olds in Rotherham.</p> <p>Capacity would be increased in each area by the creation of new provision in the private, voluntary and independent sector through reshaping existing delivery and increasing the use of flexible session times so that the early education offer was more accessible.</p> <p>Take-up would be increased through work with health, social care and voluntary sector organisations. Quality would be improved through delivering training to practitioners involved in supporting children accessing two-year-old provision and their families.</p>



Department  
for Education

© Crown copyright 2013

You may re-use this information (excluding logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence) or email [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at [www.education.gov.uk/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/contactus).

This document is available for download at:  
<https://knowledgehub.local.gov.uk/web/achievingtwoyearolds>

Representatives from all of the trial local authorities are available on the Knowledge Hub and are willing to answer questions on their trial projects.

Reference: DFE-00081-2013