

Written evidence submitted by Big Lottery Fund

Introduction

1. The Big Lottery Fund is the largest community funder in the UK. Last year we awarded £713m of good cause money raised by National Lottery players to more than 13,000 community projects. Our ambition is to enable communities to thrive.
2. To do this, we focus our funding on four priority areas:
 - a. The Big Lottery Fund support projects that are place-based. Place-based programmes are adapted to the local context, linking up different services and taking a system-wide, holistic approach to delivery.
 - b. We fund projects that intervene early to give people the best chance in life, taking action as soon as possible to tackle problems for children and families before they become difficult to reverse.
 - c. The Big Lottery Fund wants to encourage more partnership working, where organisations collaborate to solve big social challenges. We have redesigned some of our funding programmes to give more support organisations so that they can achieve more together than they could on their own.
 - d. The Big Lottery Fund supports projects that put people in the lead, by giving individuals the opportunity and power to make a difference in their communities.
3. This paper highlights some of the projects which are using Big Lottery Fund support to improve the life chances of babies and young children.
4. The Big Lottery Fund is investing over £500 million in a series of strategic multi-year funding programmes in England, focussed on some of life's key challenges, including early years development, adolescent mental health and supporting those with multiple and complex needs to get their lives back on track.
5. In particular, this paper draws on some of the work undertaken by the partnership of organisations funded through the Big Lottery Fund's A Better Start (ABS) programme, a ten-year, £215 million strategic investment focused on developing and testing new approaches to promoting Early Childhood Development (ECD) and early intervention. For more information on A Better Start, please see Annex B

What do we mean by Life Chances?

6. Life Chances is the theory that people have a varying degree of access to the opportunities that can improve the quality of their lives. In the UK, inequality of opportunity means that some people, because of their

education, local health services, family background or wealth, are less likely to live healthy, happier lives.¹

7. The World Health Organisation's Commission on the Social Determinants of Health found that pregnancy and early childhood is a crucial period in human development, and giving children 'the best possible start in life' is vital for tackling inequality.²
8. Further, research from Nobel Economist James Heckman estimates that the best time to intervene in a person's life is from conception to age 3. Programmes that intervene at these stages have the highest benefit-cost ratio and the highest rate of return to the public purse.³ These findings are supported by a systematic review of 16 research studies across ten countries which concluded that there is a strong economic, as well as social and educational, rationale for investment in early childhood development services.⁴
9. The Big Lottery Fund supports projects that are delivering evidence based effective services for babies and children at the earliest stage, so that they can have a greater impact later on in life and improve their life chances.

Place-based

10. The Institute of Voluntary Action Research has found that there is growing understanding that many of the social issues that the voluntary sector is seeking to address are systematic and complex. Further, there is good evidence that social problems are often interlinked and deep-rooted.⁵
11. An intervention that addresses underlying causes can prevent the onset of related problems, helping to halt cycles of deprivation, and reduce inequality.⁶ Place-based funding is one way of approaching these complex challenges, by delivering interventions that work holistically within a system and are tailored to local contexts.

Place based working

¹ Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2017) UK Poverty: Causes, Costs and Solutions. Retrieved from

<https://www.jrf.org.uk/file/49551/download?token=fRbyhIDk&filetype=full-report>

² World Health Organisation (2008) Closing the gap in a generation: health equity through action on the social determinants of health. Retrieved from.

http://www.who.int/social_determinants/thecommission/finalreport/en/

³ Heckman, J. J. (2008). Schools, skills and synapses. *Economic Inquiry*. 46 (3), 289–324.

⁴ Bennett, J. (2008) Early childhood services in the OECD countries: review of the literature and current policy in the early childhood field. UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre

⁵ Buckley, E. Cairns, B, Taylor, M, Turner, K (2017) Working in Place: Collaborative funding in practice

Learning from five case studies. Institute for Voluntary Research

⁶ Coote, A. (2012) The Wisdom of Prevention. Retrieved from.

https://b.3cdn.net/nefoundation/b8278023a5b025649f_5zm6i2btg.pdf

The Big Lottery Fund's HeadStart programme is a £56m investment in partnerships that are exploring and testing ways to improve young people's mental health and wellbeing.

In Cumbria, Carlisle Eden Mind, are building relationships with and links into all major young people's support providers in the area.

Carlisle Eden Mind worked with local charity Young Cumbria, to link them up with clinical psychologists, in order to design a training package for practitioners working to support young people's mental health. The project helped local services to develop a shared language that everyone could understand, including young people and their families. The project is linking up clinical psychologists, schools, and other services, to better share learning on what kinds of interventions are effective, and to help tailor services to local contexts.

12. For example, A Better Start Blackpool has invested £1million into transforming the health visiting service across the town. The new service has been created with the help of Blackpool parents and healthcare professionals, who have been consulted extensively in the redesign of a health visiting service model. This includes an increase in the minimum number of health visitor checks (from the statutory 5 to 8) to make sure that child development needs are identified as early as possible, and public health messages are more consistently shared. This approach ensures that all families receive access to a high quality evidence-based service, with additional support being provided to families who need it most.⁷
13. Improved use of data is also an important part of Blackpool's approach to joining up services. Local organisations are being supported to build a town wide system, to make it easier to share and compare data. On top of this, services have been encouraged to avoid using jargon and technical terms, and adopt a common language that is more inclusive and easier for everyone to understand.
14. To improve the life chances of babies and children, the Big Lottery Fund supports placed-based projects that are delivering programmes within communities and building connections between local services. A family may access a number of services and support networks during and after the birth of a child. It is important that these different services are joined up and working together. By sharing their experience and insights with each other, and working in partnership, individual organisations can improve the quality of services for babies and children.

Prevention and Early Intervention

⁷ Marmot, M. (2011) Fair society, healthy lives. HM Government. Retrieved from. <https://www.gov.uk/dfid-research-outputs/fair-society-healthy-lives-the-marmot-review-strategic-review-of-health-inequalities-in-england-post-2010>

15. Early intervention is about taking action as soon as possible to tackle problems for children and families before they become more difficult to reverse. There is good evidence that projects that employ elements of prevention and early intervention are particularly effective at supporting people to maximise their potential, and enjoy a better quality of life.⁸
16. Further, there is a growing body of evidence showing the importance of early childhood development on children's future learning, behaviour and health.^{9,10} Early brain development sets the trajectories for cognitive, mental, social and physical health, and lays the foundation for a healthy adulthood.¹¹
17. The period from conception to age 3 is a crucial window of opportunity for infant brain development. It is also a time when parents are particularly receptive to offers of advice and support.¹² Sensitive and attuned family relationships in early childhood predict the prevalence of depression in adolescence and quality of couple relationships in adulthood.¹³ This makes early interventions at this stage in a child's life particularly important, and impactful.

Speech and Language Development

18. The impact of prevention and early intervention on improving life chances can be particularly seen in the speech and language development of babies and young children.
19. According to the Bercow report, approximately 50% of children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds have significantly lower speech and language skills than other children of the same age.¹⁴ Without effective communication skills, children will struggle to thrive in later life in terms of achievement, making friends, and having positive interactions with the world around them.
20. Having a good vocabulary at 16-25 months predicts good reading accuracy and comprehension six years later.¹⁵ The negative impact of

⁸ Early Action Task Force (2011) *The Triple Dividend: Thriving lives. Costing less. Contributing more.*

⁹ Allen, G. (2011) *Early Intervention: the next steps.* HM Government. Retrieved from. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-intervention-the-next-steps--2>

¹⁰ Marmot, M. (2011) *Fair society, healthy lives.* HM Government. Retrieved from. <https://www.gov.uk/dfid-research-outputs/fair-society-healthy-lives-the-marmot-review-strategic-review-of-health-inequalities-in-england-post-2010>

¹¹ Leach, P. (2017) *Transforming Infant Wellbeing: research, policy and practice for the first 1,001 days.* London: Routledge

¹² All Party Parliamentary Group for Conception to Age 2 (2013) *The First 1,001 Critical Days Manifesto.* London: Wave Trust & NSPCC.

¹³ Murrar, L. (2014) *The Psychology of Babies: how relationships support development from birth to two.* London: Robinson

¹⁴ Bercow Review of Services for Children and Young people (0-19) with Speech, Language and Communication Needs (2008) Nottingham: DCSF Publications

poor speech and language development grow exponentially over a child's life. Children with poor vocabulary are more than twice as likely to be unemployed at age 34 as children with a good vocabulary, but similar non-verbal ability.¹⁶

21. On top of this, early education has a long-term impact on children's future development, influencing how well they do at school, the quality of their health and well-being, and their achievements later in life.¹⁷ Only early education and childcare that is of a high quality and delivered by well-qualified staff has a positive impact on children's learning and development and helps narrow the gap in attainment for the most disadvantaged.¹⁸
22. The A Better Start partnerships are working with nurseries and pre-schools to help improve the quality of early education and the skills and knowledge of the workforce. In Lambeth, the Evelina award is given to early year's settings that have demonstrated a communication and language friendly environment. A key aim of the award is to train the workforce so that they feel confident in identifying speech, language and communication needs and can work with parents and practitioners to ensure the child receives appropriate service referrals and support.
23. Attuned and sensitive interactions between care givers and babies can support speech and language development. Evidence shows that the home environment children grow up has a bigger impact on their speech and language development than parents' education and income.¹⁹ Communication is at the heart of healthy relationships, and the same is true for the parent-child relationship.
24. The five A Better Start partnerships are currently developing an ambitious public health communications campaign, which aims to build parents' understanding of early social, emotional and language development and promote better parenting techniques. The campaign will be delivered through a variety of channels, including paid for and earned media, the early year's workforce and local influencers in the community. Core messages will be used across the five partnerships, but locally tailored to fit the specific contexts and populations of each area.²⁰
25. The A Better Start partnerships are delivering a range of science and evidence-based programmes to support young children's speech,

¹⁵ Duff FJ1, Reen G1, Plunkett K1, Nation K1 (2015). Do infant vocabulary skills predict school-age language and literacy outcomes? *J Child Psychol Psychiatry*.

¹⁶ Save the Children (2016) Early Language development and children's primary school attainment in English and maths: new research findings. London: Save the Children

¹⁷ HM Government (2011) Early Intervention: The Next Steps. London: Cabinet Office

¹⁸ Sylva K, Melhuish E, Sammons P, Siraj I, Taggart B (2014) The Effective Pre-school, Primary and Secondary Education Project: Students' Educational and Developmental Outcomes at Age 16. London: Institute of Education

¹⁹ Sylva, K. et al (2014) Effective Pre-School, Primary and Secondary Education Project (EPPSE 3-16) Influences on student's development at age 16. London: Department for Education

²⁰ See Annex B

communication and language development. For instance, Fathers Reading Every Day (FRED), being delivered in Blackpool, Nottingham and Southend, has encouraged dads to develop a shared interest in reading with their children that has lasted beyond the length of the programme²¹.

26. An independent evaluation of the impact of FRED on more than 300 children found that, for children who participated in the programme, there was marked improvement at above expected levels in reading, writing and numeracy, when compared to peers who did not take part. Among participating children, two fifths (42%) made progress to a greater than expected extent in their reading. Among those children who did not take part in FRED, only 11% made greater than expected progress in their reading levels. More than a fifth (22%) of children participating in the intervention made progress in numeracy to a greater than expected extent, compared to 9% among those children who did not.
27. Such early, sensitive involvement by fathers continues to deliver benefits. At age five, their children know and use more words, can pick out letters more accurately and are better at problem solving; by age ten, their vocabulary is wider and their maths skills are better too.²²
28. Through place-based, long term, early interventions such as these, the Big Lottery Fund is seeking to change the way that systems operate around children and families in order to improve Early Childhood Development outcomes. Improving these outcomes, especially around speech and language development, gives them greater access to future opportunities, and improves their life chances.

Working in Partnership

29. Through our grant programmes, the Big Lottery Fund is supporting more people to work in partnership with one another. Our aim is to encourage more co-operation, with different organisations and individuals from different backgrounds contributing their strengths towards a joint aim.
30. The Big Lottery Fund is supporting projects that bring together everyone involved in the delivery of local children's service, from parents and voluntary and community organisations, to local government, health agencies, and researchers. It is important to come to a common understanding and take the time to develop a shared vision, in order to build solid plans and consensus for change. Nurturing trusting relationships and a spirit of collaboration are vital.
31. A good example of what this approach looks like in practice is the Mums and Babies in Mind (MABIM) project, led by Maternal Mental Health Alliance and the Mental Health Foundation.

²¹ See Annex B

²² McKelvey, L, Schiffman, R. and Fitzgerald, H.E., 2010. Father behaviour in interaction with toddlers. Poster presentation at the 11th biennial meeting of the World Association for Infant Mental Health, Leipzig, Germany

32. The project is helping local leaders to improve quality of life of mothers experiencing mental health problems during pregnancy and the first year of their baby's life.
33. In each area it works in, the project aims to identify the barriers to service improvement, and to come up with solutions that will better help mothers access support. By tapping into the knowledge of members of the local community, the project is building partnerships within local services. The aim is to create quality, evidence-based care services for all mothers who need it.
34. In order to build effective partnerships, the different organisations and individuals involved need to acknowledge and respect each other's strengths. Sometimes, this requires one partner, such as a local authority, being willing to give up some control to ensure that the views of everyone in a community are properly represented.

Partnership funding

35. The Big Lottery Fund has redesigned our funding offer in England, to help organisations work together with a shared set of goals and values. This Partnerships programme is awarding grants of over £10,000 to organisations who are willing to share responsibility and influence with others.

Putting People in the Lead

36. One of the Big Lottery Fund's core priorities is to support projects that are giving people the space and resources to improve their own communities. The Big Lottery Fund believes that everyone has a unique set of strengths, and the best programmes are those that invest in individuals.
37. Home Start is a UK wide charity providing support to families and children through early intervention, peer-support programmes. Home Start Kernow are using a grant of £490,000 to deliver Connecting Communities, a home befriending project that will support 620 families over three years. Volunteers will be recruited to provide regular emotional and practical support for families within their homes. The volunteers are themselves parents, and so can provide advice and support using their own experiences and knowledge.
38. Home Start Kernow are also creating a steering group, made up of families involved with the programme, to help improve and redesign the programme as it is delivered. This kind of approach, which is in common with all of the Home Start projects around the UK, gives people greater confidence and control over their lives. For example, Home Start's 2017 Impact Report found that, as a result of their interventions, 94% of parents reported that they had improved self-esteem, and 96% of parents said that their children's health and emotional wellbeing had improved.²³

²³ Home-Start UK, (2017) Strong Families Make Strong Communities Home-Start's Social Impact Report. Retrieved from <https://www.home->

Putting People in the Lead

In, Nottingham, the A Better Start partnership has created a new workforce of paid Family Mentors to deliver a programme called 'Small Steps at Home'. All families are offered access to a Family Mentor if they are expecting a child or have a new baby.

Family Mentors are recruited from the community through an assessment process that focuses on their approach, attitude and personal qualities, rather than on specific work experience or qualifications. The mentors complement the existing workforce of child health, education and development professionals, contributing their knowledge and experience to the programme, and improving their own skills.

This approach ensures that the views of the community are properly represented in the decision making process. It also means that there is a broader consensus and understanding amongst all of the different services, agencies and individuals involved in improving the lives of babies, children and families in Nottingham, helping to ensure the longevity of the partnerships and relationships built in the A Better Start areas.

39. In London the Mental Health Foundation are running the Young Mums Together Project. The project provides practical mental health and emotional support, a low-cost, consistent service that met a gap in support for young mothers.²⁴
40. The heart of the project is the facilitated peers support groups run by the Foundation, and originally based in a children's centre in Hackney. The young mums use each other's experiences as mothers, women and members of their community, to navigate difficulties around mental health, parenting, peer support, family relationships, employment, education and training. As a result of the success of this first group, the Foundation has now set up a further 12 peer support groups, and have engaged 264 young mothers and 16 young fathers.
41. There is huge value in enabling people with lived experience to offer peer support and share their knowledge and experiences to help others. Projects that put people in the lead benefit from access people with a diverse set of skills and experiences, and more importantly those with expertise and a vested interest in the effective delivery. At the same time, the people they work with are given the opportunity to make a difference in their communities.

Conclusion

start.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=c0f7d46e-2a38-4a4e-b419-a8c5d8e2a047

²⁴ The Mental Health Foundation. (2013) Young Mums Together Report. Retrieved from. <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/file/1091/download?token=zIpCox4t>

42. Pregnancy and the first few years after birth are a crucial period in a child's life. At this early age, social and emotional development, how a child's speech and language develops, what level of access they have to health and education services, and how much support their parents and families receive, can all have a significant impact on outcomes in later life.
43. The evidence and findings laid out in this paper illustrates the importance of promoting healthy early childhood development, through programmes that are adapted to the local context, provide high quality universal and targeted support, and are building partnerships and linking up services.
44. To deliver these programmes, test them and learn what works effectively, they need to be funded in the long-term. Through the delivery of the A Better Start programmes, the Big Lottery Fund aims to improve the life chances of babies and children, whilst at the same time, strengthening local partnerships and networks of support. Investing in children's Early Childhood Development will improve their life chances, increasing the likelihood that they will have healthier, happier lives, and reducing pressures on services and the public purse.
45. At the Big Lottery Fund, we welcome the Education Select Committee's focus on this vital issue and would be delighted to provide oral evidence to the committee to further share our expertise in this area.
46. We are also proud to be able to offer Committee members the opportunity to witness our interventions in action, and meet some of the beneficiaries of our strategic programmes. Please find below contact details if you would like to take us up on this offer.

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Annex A: Contributing to the evidence base

Via Big Lottery Fund's A Better Start programme, we have funded:

- **'Preventonomics'**: which supports investing in prevention by identifying cost-effective preventative interventions. This project included the development of the Preventonomics framework (unit cost calculator and guidance²⁵) by the London School of Economics, which our five A Better Start partnerships are using to measure the economic impact of their work over time. We have included a copy of this resource at Annex C, and are proactively sharing it with local leaders and commissioners considering early intervention work.
- **Better Evidence for A Better Start**: Dartington Social Research Unit and University of Warwick developed a methodology to support local areas to develop strategies for delivering 'place-based' reform of public systems to improve outcomes for children from pregnancy to their fourth birthday.²⁶ This evidence review includes:
 - **'The Science Within: what matters for child outcomes in early years'** which pulls together evidence on the key influences on a child's early development, how this takes place, and the areas where society can make a difference; and
 - **'What Works: an overview of the best available evidence on giving children a better start'** which summarises what is currently known about what works to support parents and parenting during pregnancy and the child's first four years. The paper includes a framework to bring about a step change in support for to improve their nutritional, socio-emotional and language outcomes.
- **Volunteer Evidence Review**: Parents 1st and the Institute for Voluntary Action Research carried out an evidence review to explore if and how volunteering, peer support and community champions can support child development outcomes. This is accompanied by an implementation framework to support the design and delivery of volunteer programmes.²⁷

National evaluation of A Better Start:

We will also be contributing further to the evidence base via the national evaluation of A Better Start. The evaluation is led by the Warwick Consortium and will run throughout the 10-year programme. It involves three key strands of work that will focus on the set-up, implementation and effectiveness of the programme within and across the partnership areas:

- An implementation evaluation of the set-up and delivery of the programme;
- An impact and economic evaluation of the partnerships, including a longitudinal cohort study of families in funded and comparison areas; and

²⁵ <https://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/research/a-better-start/systems-change/preventonomics>

²⁶ <https://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/research/a-better-start/systems-change/better-evidence-for-a-better-start>

²⁷ <https://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/research/a-better-start/systems-change/volunteer-evidence-review>

- A programme of learning and dissemination.

We are very happy to share the evaluation findings with the committee as they emerge, and have included the current timeline for when different products will become available.

Expected key evaluation outputs:

- 2017 – 2021: Effectiveness of implementation and understanding delivery reports
- 2018: Baseline report
- 2019 – 2023: Interim impact reports (annually)
- 2023 – 2024: Understanding models of delivery. What pathways work best in which contexts?
- 2025: What was the impact of the programme?
- 2025: Can the programme be replicated?

Expected supporting evaluation outputs:

- Ongoing: case studies, emerging stories, lessons learned
- 2016 - 2020: Practical tools to help programme delivery
- 2016 - 2021: Learning and insight to aid delivery

Joint campaign on early social and emotional and language development:

The five ABS partnerships are jointly developing and delivering an ambitious public health communications campaign, which aims to build parents' understanding of early social, emotional and language development (ESEL) and promote more effective caregiving interactions.

This campaign is a unique opportunity to contribute to the evidence base on the use of public health campaigns to improve early childhood development, and the learning will have significance for policy and practice at a local, national and international level. The focus both on social and emotional and language development is innovative and recognises that these two areas of child development are closely intertwined.

The A Better Start campaign is informed by an analysis of expert consensus on Early Social and Emotional and Language Development^[1]. It also builds on the *Core Story of Early Childhood Development*, an empirically tested message platform developed over a decade through an innovative partnership between the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child and the FrameWorks Institute. The *Core Story* uses metaphors to convey complex science about brain development in an accessible way, emphasising the 'why' as well as the 'what' of effective caregiving^[2].

The campaign will be delivered through a variety of channels, including paid for and earned media, the early years workforce and local influencers in the community. It will have core messages that are used across the five

^[1] See Annex B

^[2] <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/project-for-babies/>

partnerships, but will be locally tailored to fit the specific contexts and populations of each area.

A creative communications agency, 23red, will work in collaboration with the A Better Start partnerships and FrameWorks Institute to design and deliver the campaign. The impact of the campaign will be robustly and independently evaluated by Ecorys. The proposed evaluation design uses a multimethod approach, including measures of relevance, exposure, outtakes, and a range of outcomes including attitudes, knowledge, and caregiving behaviours.

Baby Steps is a science based perinatal programme designed to support mums and dads to be able to manage the emotional and physical transition into parenthood developed by NSPCC and Dr Angela Underdown at the University of Warwick. Given the high levels of deprivation in their target wards, Blackpool Better Start have adapted the programme to provide it universally across the Better Start wards and then across the whole of the town to all expectant parents. The programme was evaluated by the NSPCC across a range of outcomes including parents' relationships with their baby in the antenatal and postnatal period, couple relationships and parental self-esteem ^[3]. The evaluation found that parents who attended Baby Steps:

- . Showed an improvement in the quality of their relationship with their babies
- . Had increased satisfaction in their relationships with their partners
- . Showed a decrease in anxiety and depression
- . Had increased levels of self esteem
- . Had lower rates of caesareans, low birth weight and premature babies compared to the general population.

Annex B: A Better Start Case Studies

A Better Start – Programme Summary

A Better Start (ABS) programme is a ten-year, £215 million strategic investment by the Big Lottery Fund focused on developing and testing new approaches to promoting Early Childhood Development (ECD) and early intervention.

A Better Start aims to bring about changes to the way that systems operate around children and families in order to improve Early Childhood Development outcomes and to bring about and embed:

- A shift in culture and spending towards support and services for children and families that is prevention focused, and responsive to local needs;
- Effective partnership working across local health, public services, the social sector and the wider community to co-produce and deliver less bureaucratic and more joined up support and services; and
- A commitment to science and evidence-based support and services, and to innovation.

The ABS partnerships have developed locally tailored strategies and service portfolios to promote early childhood development, drawing on a detailed understanding of the strengths of the community and the specific challenges they face. These strategies include evidenced-based and science-based

^[3] NSPCC. (2017) Baby Steps: Evidence, impact and evaluation. Available at: www.nspcc.org.uk/services-and-resources/services-for-children-and-families/baby-steps/evidence

approaches across different levels of prevention, which aim to improve the diet and nutrition, social and emotional development, and speech, language and communication skills of babies and young children.

All of the partnerships are placed-based, meaning that they are delivering interventions within and alongside the local community. The ABS partnerships are ensuring that universal and specialist services are developed and delivered that are appropriate to the requirements of the babies, children and families they are working with. ABS is a long-term investment, and our response to the Select Committee's inquiry will outline how ABS is helping to build sustainable and financially resilient local partnerships that can provide support at every stage of a child's life from pregnancy to their fourth birthday, intervening early and consistently.

a) Speech, language and communication

Fathers Reading Every Day (FRED) is an evidence-based programme designed to encourage dads to read to their child or children every day. FRED is being delivered in the A Better Start areas of Blackpool, Nottingham, and Southend. FRED aims to:

- encourage the engagement of fathers in their children's early years settings and schools
- increase the amount of time fathers spend reading to their children and the numbers of books read to children
- improve closeness and attachment between fathers and young children
- improve school readiness for children aged 2 to 4 leading to better outcomes at age 5 in literacy, numeracy and maths.

The programme was developed in the United States by Texas A&M AgriLife Extensive Services. The Fatherhood Institute is providing FRED training for practitioners in the United Kingdom. An evaluation of FRED using pre and post measures was commissioned by Fatherhood Institute. The study indicated the positive impact of the programme on children's reading, writing and numeracy in nine UK primary schools.

For more information: <http://www.fatherhoodinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/FRED-evaluation-report-Sep-2014.pdf>

'LEAP Ahead 'Talk and Play Every Day' is an intervention that has been adapted from existing programmes developed by the Speech and Language Team (SLT) based at the Evelina Children's Hospital, London. It aims to increase the community's awareness of the importance of speech, language and communication and typical development in this area from conception, and how to differentiate between speech, language and communication needs and English as an Additional Language and how to refer and get support. It also aims to improve SLC outcomes for children in the ABS wards of Lambeth through improved interactions and attachment with responsive parents and carers. This will be achieved through providing training to early years practitioner to help attain the Evelina Award in early years settings; Chattertime groups working directly with targeted children & families in the local area; and universal SLC health promotion messages particularly focusing on 0-2 years and the importance of bilingualism.

Talking Together is a programme that supports the communication and language development of two-year-olds through home visits that encourage play and conversation. Families are offered a place on the programme following a universal language assessment in the child's home or a referral from an early years professional. Talking Together aims to:

- give parents and carers the knowledge, understanding and tools to improve their child's communication skills
- develop the family's understanding of the importance of play in developing their child's communication skills
- equip parents and carers with the skills and confidence to be actively involved in their child's play and learning.

Talking Together was adapted by Sure Start BHT drawing on learning from 'It Takes Two To Talk', a group based service developed by the Hanen Centre in Canada. Whilst 'It Takes Two to Talk' is delivered by speech and language therapists over 6-8 weeks, Talking Together has been designed to be delivered by Language Development Workers in the child's home.

For more information: <https://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/research/a-better-start/speech-language-and-communication>

Making it REAL is an evidence-based programme that works with practitioners to support children's early literacy, language and communication development in the family home. Children aged 2-5 who would benefit from additional language support are referred to the programme by other professionals working with these families. Making it REAL aims to:

- improve the communication and language development of children aged 2-5
- increase parental confidence in supporting the development of their child(ren)'s language and communication skills
- increase practitioner knowledge and confidence in visiting families at home to support early language and literacy
- narrow the gap in attainment at age 5 in literacy, communication and language development

Making it REAL draws on evidence from the original REAL project designed by Sheffield University. It uses a framework called 'ORIM' (Opportunities, Recognition, Interaction and Model), which is based on the concept that there are four main ways in which parents can support their children's literacy development. Evaluations of the programme have shown a significant impact on children developmental outcomes.

For more information: <https://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/research/a-better-start/speech-language-and-communication>

Early Words together is programme developed by National Literacy Trust. It trains early year's staff and volunteers to work with parents and children aged three to five in Nottingham, building parents' confidence so that they can support their children's communication, language and literacy skills at home. Underperforming children who take part in Early Words Together have been found to catch up with their peers in their understanding of spoken language in just three months. 86% of parents who take part in the programme report they

now talk more to their children – and two-thirds feel more confident about sharing books with their child. 73% of parents and carers who took part in Early Words Together now read with their child every day – up from 53% at the start of the programme. Families who read the least often at the start of the programme show a 91% increase in reading frequency by the end.

For more information: <https://literacytrust.org.uk/programmes/early-words-together/>

Southend speech and language pathway: Southend are developing a new speech and language pathway, which draws on a portfolio of service based innovations, and focuses on prevention and early intervention. They are currently evaluating the use of Wellcomm screening at a universal scale, against the standardised and validated Pre-School Language Scale. This screening aims to ensure that young children receive appropriate access and referrals to specialist speech and language services. It will also provide Southend with population-level data on language development of children aged 0-4, which can inform the design and delivery of future services.

Blackpool Speech and Language Home Visiting Service: This new service aims to improve children's development in speech, language and communication by working with the parent/carers to develop their skills and confidence in developing their child's language skills through everyday interaction and play, and in providing a supportive communication environment at home. It will be offered across the seven Better Start wards to young children highlighted as being at risk of developing speech and language delays without intervention. The service will provide a specific 6 week language and interaction programme provided in the family's home, specific SLC focused family groups in the local Children's Centre and community, and early identification of children who may have specific long term developmental needs and so can be referred on for specific support.

Doorstep Library is a volunteer led programme which involves volunteers visiting children at their homes weekly, reading stories and exchanging books. They are also able to sign post families to where to make referrals and access other services.

Natural Thinkers connects young children and families to nature. The programme promotes effective use of outdoor environments, by using natural resources to explore, make and create, e.g. making a den out of branches and leaves or harvesting home grown produce. Through a range of active and explorative activities children's cognitive development is supported. The service aims to: improve communication and language development and well-being for project children; increase early years practitioner's confidence, knowledge and skills in using the outdoors creatively to support children's communication and language and personal, social and emotional development; and increase parental confidence in playing with their children outdoors to support their development in these areas.

For more information: <https://www.naturalthinkers.co.uk/>

Imagination Library: Building on the existing provision of the Dolly Parton Imagination Library in various parts of the city, the ABS partnership in Nottingham is funding the book gifting scheme for every child born in the 4 wards over the next 10 years. They have streamlined the existing registration process to reduce administration, with the aim of easier registration and increased uptake. There are currently over 2,800 registered individual children, and a total of 40,450 books have been delivered.

For more information: <http://www.smallstepsbigchanges.org.uk/groups-activities/imagination-library>

Nottingham Literacy Hub: The ABS partnership in Nottingham has funded the majority of the new Nottingham Literacy Hub, with the National Literacy Trust and City Council. One of the priorities for this programme is working with nurseries around language development and also to develop a definition and campaign around 'school readiness' for the city.

For more information: <https://literacytrust.org.uk/communities/nottingham/>

b) Family support and pathway approaches

Family Mentors and Small Steps at Home: The ABS partnership in Nottingham has commissioned a new workforce of Family Mentors to deliver a manualised programme of home visits and group activities 'Small Steps at Home'. The programme is comprised of advice and activities which incorporate DH, NICE ROSPA Unicef Baby Friendly guidance and compliments guidance from the Healthy Child Programme. All families living in the Small Steps Big Changes area of Nottingham are offered access to a Family Mentor if they are expecting a baby or have a new baby. Designed to complement the existing workforce of child health, education and development professionals, Family Mentors are recruited from the community through an assessment process that focuses on their approach, attitude and personal qualities rather than on specific work experience or qualifications.

New health visiting model in Blackpool: Blackpool Better Start has invested £1million into transforming the health visiting service across the town. The new service has been created with the help of Blackpool parents and healthcare professionals as part of Blackpool Better Start's ten-year programme to improve life chances for children aged 0-4. It includes additional health visitor contacts with families (a minimum of eight) to ensure early intervention within any identified child development delays and to ensure consistent messaging on public health messages including social and emotional development, language and communication and diet and nutrition.

The investment includes extensive consultation with parents, healthcare practitioners and external consultants; the redesign of the service model; the training of all practitioners; and the review and creation of all assessment tools.

Community Activity and Nutrition (CAN) is a service for pregnant women with a BMI of 25 or more living in the Lambeth Early Action Partnership (LEAP) area of Lambeth. It aims to support women to make healthy lifestyle changes to enhance their own and their baby's health. CAN builds on evidence from the UK

Pregnancies Better Eating and Activity Trial (UPBEAT) research study, which showed that support from health trainers had a significant positive impact on women's diets. CAN was developed by a team of health professionals and experts and tested in the Lambeth community over the last five years. It has since been modified, drawing on local data on pregnant women at booking to identify groups with the highest prevalence of obesity. Insights from local parents have been used to adapt programme materials to be culturally appropriate to the needs of pregnant women in Lambeth.

For more information - <https://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/research/a-better-start/diet-and-nutrition>

Mums and Babies in Mind (MABIM) is a project led by Maternal Mental Health Alliance and the Mental Health Foundation, funded by Big Lottery Fund.²⁸ It is running in Better Start Blackpool and A Better Start Southend as well as in Gloucestershire and Haringey.

The project supports local leaders to improve the care and quality of life for mothers experiencing mental health problems during pregnancy and the first year of life, and provide support for their babies. In each area, the project aims to identify the barriers to service improvement, and to inform and support effective solutions. The improvement of local services will result in good quality, evidence-based care pathways (including information, support and treatment) at the right time, for all mums who need it. Learning is being shared through online resources to inspire commissioners and service providers working in other areas of the country. This includes a perinatal mental health mapping tool and a toolkit to inform the development of specialist perinatal mental health community services. An evaluation of the project is expected to be published later in 2018.

For more information - <https://maternalmentalhealthalliance.org/tag/mabim/>

Family Nurse Partnership (FNP) is a voluntary, intensive home visiting programme for first time young mums delivered in around 90 areas in England. FNP aims to enable young mums to improve:

- Pregnancy health, behaviours and outcomes;
- Child health and development by developing parenting knowledge and skills;
- Economic self-sufficiency, by helping them to achieve their aspirations (such as employment or returning to education).

The evidence base includes three US-based large-scale Randomised Controlled Trials (RCTs²⁹). A recent RCT in England found that FNP promoted cognitive and language development up to 24 months; and helped protect children from serious injury, abuse and neglect through early identification of safeguarding

²⁸ <http://maternalmentalhealthalliance.org/mumsandbabiesinmind/>

²⁹ Olds, D.L. (2006). The Nurse-Family Partnership: an evidence-based preventive intervention. *Infant Mental Health Journal*, 27(1), 5-25.

³⁰ Robling, M. (2015) *The Building Blocks Trial: Executive Summary*. Cardiff University.

http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/500649/Building-Blocks-Executive-Summary-Report.pdf

³¹reducing smoking in pregnancy; improving birth weight; reducing rates of subsequent pregnancy by 24 months postpartum; reducing rates of A&E attendances and hospital admissions in the first two years of life.

risks³⁰; but it was not found to have an impact across the study's four main short term outcomes³¹.

The five A Better Start partnerships, along with six other local areas in the FNP ADAPT programme, are trialling a range of adaptations to the programme with the aim of improving outcomes.

For more information - <http://fnp.nhs.uk/fnp-next-steps/adapt/>

Family Action Perinatal Support Service is being delivered to pregnant women who live in the Better Start area of Bradford and have, or are at risk of developing, mild to moderate mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. The service aims to provide emotional support to families where a parent is struggling with their emotional health or wellbeing during pregnancy and the first year after birth. It is led by a professional project coordinator and provided by a team of befrienders who have experience of parenthood and/or receiving the service themselves.

An independent evaluation by Warwick University found that 88% of services users had experienced a reduction in their anxiety scores after using the service; with a 59% reduction reported for those experiencing depression.³² An earlier RCT by researchers from Kings, Guy's and St Thomas' found that the service halved the rate of maternal depression³³.

For more information - <https://betterstartbradford.org.uk/families-get-involved/our-projects/perinatal-support-service/>

Trauma-informed pathway

Blackpool Better Start is developing a system wide approach to reducing and responding to trauma, which will transform the workforce over the lifetime of the programme and beyond. Complementing the suite of trauma informed and trauma focused interventions being implemented by the Centre of Early Childhood Development, the trauma informed strategy will bring out sustainable change spanning the community and all other partner organisations.

The Centre is also piloting the use of the ACEs questions, delivered in a trauma informed way and utilising a more therapeutic approach, through the Health Visiting service, as part of the wider Health Visiting transformation. Through co-designing the pilot alongside Health Visitors themselves, and community members, the Centre will be generating learning in relation to the impact of ACEs on the workforce and quality of assessments. This new approach is also informing the newly developing supervision models incorporated as part of the new HV model.

The centre will also be embarking on a foundation training with Blackpool First Response, Neighbourhood and Early Action policing teams, supporting them to become more trauma sensitive prior to further development in this area. In addition, work is also underway in partnership with Dr Warren Larkin to develop

³² <https://www.family-action.org.uk/content/uploads/2014/06/Perinatal-Support-Project-evaluation-2012-Professor-Jane-Barlow.pdf>

³³ <https://www.family-action.org.uk/content/uploads/2014/06/Southwark-Perinatal-Support-Project-Evaluation-2009.pdf>

a new trauma informed service for women in pregnancy with the aim of improving maternal and early years diet and nutrition.

Parent and Infant Relationship Service (PAIRS) is a specialist therapeutic service delivered by psychotherapists and psychologists to support parent-infant relationships where there are high levels of need. It is being delivered by the Lambeth Early Action Partnership (LEAP).³⁴

PAIRS is a targeted service for parents of infants who are experiencing, or at risk of, insecure or disordered attachment; and is available for mothers and fathers with children aged 0-4. The programme promotes good infant mental health, and improves attachment security, infant cognitive and emotional development, and child capacity to form and maintain positive relationships.³⁵ For the parent, PAIRS aims to improve parent-infant relationships and perceptions of parenting, and reduce parenting stress and depression. PAIRS group sessions based on a parent-infant relationship technique called 'Wait, Watch and Wonder' is offered to parents who don't meet the threshold for the targeted service.

For more information - <https://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/research/a-better-start/social-and-emotional-development> (PAIRS case study)

Baby Steps is a science based perinatal programme which supports mums and dads to manage the emotional and physical transition into parenthood.³⁶ The programme was evaluated by the NSPCC³⁷ across a range of outcomes including parents' relationships with their baby in the antenatal and postnatal period, couple relationships and parental self-esteem. The evaluation found that parents who attended Baby Steps:

- Showed an improvement in the quality of their relationship with their babies;
- Had increased satisfaction in their relationships with their partners;
- Showed a decrease in anxiety and depression;
- Had increased levels of self-esteem; and
- Had lower rates of caesareans, low birth weight and premature babies compared to the general population.

For more information - <https://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/research/a-better-start/social-and-emotional-development>

Empowering Parents, Empowering Communities is an evidence-based universal parenting programme for mothers and fathers of children aged 2-11 years old, which is led by trained parents. EPEC parenting programmes combine the latest developmental science and theory with well-evidenced parenting strategies and methods. EPEC aims to improve parent-child relationships and interactions, reduce children's disruptive behaviour and other problems, increase parents' confidence in their parenting abilities. A Randomised Control Trial and a cohort study of the programme took place in the UK in 2012, which identified

³⁴ <https://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/research/a-better-start/social-and-emotional-development>

³⁵ Cohen, N.J., Muir, E., Lojkasek, M. et al. (1999). Watch, Wait and Wonder: Testing the effectiveness of a new approach to mother-infant psychotherapy. *Infant Mental Health Journal*. 20, 429-451.

³⁶ <https://www.blackpoolbetterstart.org.uk/news/baby-steps/>

³⁷ NSPCC. (2017) Baby Steps: Evidence, impact and evaluation. Available at: www.nspcc.org.uk/services-and-resources/services-for-children-and-families/baby-steps/evidence

that EPEC had led to significant improvements in child outcomes and parenting competencies.

Triple P: 'Positive Parenting Programme' offers a range of interventions at different levels of intensity to support parents with self-identified parenting needs. It provides simple and practical strategies to help them confidently manage their children's behaviour, prevent problems developing and build strong, healthy relationships. The ABS partnership in Nottingham has recently paid for training for colleagues in Early Help and the City Council Children's Services in order to start delivering this evidence based programme in a variety of settings. They will be working closely with them to measure impact and delivery over the next couple of years.

c) Early education

The Evelina Award is given to early years settings in the maintained and Private, Voluntary and Independent sector that have demonstrated a communication and language friendly environment. A key aim is to train the workforce so that they feel confident in their judgments of when there may be a speech, language and communication need, and are then able to talk to and support parents with referrals and also to support practitioners in providing high quality practice in the area of communication and language. The settings are assigned a link speech and language therapist, who is able to support the setting through an audit tool that highlights key aspects of what practitioners can do and provide to support young child's speech and language development. The therapist visits the setting regularly to coach practitioners in using adult, child interaction videos (ACI). All practitioners at the setting complete a 2-day training course facilitated by the SLT service. The Evelina award is now being offered to all 22 PVI settings in the ABS wards in Lambeth.

Blackpool Quality Mark: Blackpool Better Start has launched a new quality mark to be awarded to early years settings that are providing high quality services for young children in Blackpool. The aim of the quality mark is to provide assurance to parents that their child is receiving the best experience and learning opportunity in that setting. The achievement of the Better Start Quality Mark will provide settings with public recognition. It will help the setting continue along the journey of self-improvement and to providing the best quality service they can to the children and families they serve. It will give settings the confidence to scrutinise its practice against a set of standards and will also support them when OfSTED calls. They will be able to share the Quality Mark and reflective practice that has been undertaken with the OfSTED Inspectors, highlighting their drive and desire for continued quality improvement.

For more information: <https://www.blackpoolbetterstart.org.uk/news/blackpool-better-start-introduce-quality-mark/>