

Summary: EIF review of Language & Cognitive Development Programmes

Key points from review:

Cognitive programmes are defined as those with “primary aim to support children’s cognitive development by teaching parents age-appropriate methods for structuring or ‘scaffolding’ learning tasks” (p39).

- Only programmes involving a **clearly documented parenting component** were included. Activity delivered primarily through early-years settings, and programmes considered ‘therapy’ excluded.
- There is **surprisingly little evaluation** of programmes in this area, given clear longer-term impact of early language and cognitive development on life chances and the considerable investment in Early Years over recent decades. Development of evidence base and improved evaluation of programmes must be prioritised and properly resourced.
- It is critical to **recognise and support positive interactions** between early-years settings and parents/caregivers; both provide complementary support for child’s language and cognitive development.

Evidence basis	Programmes
<p>Evidence-based (replicated test) (EIF rating = 4) At least two high-quality evaluations (RCT/QED) demonstrating a consistently positive impact across populations and environments: includes RCT/QED evidence of a child outcome lasting a year or longer.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No ‘cognitive development’ programmes were identified that currently meet this level of evidence <p>But:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Family Nurse Partnership (primarily aimed at improving attachment, but with positive language outcomes at 12–24 months)</i>
<p>Evidence-based (single test) (EIF rating = 3/3+) At least one rigorously conducted RCT/QED demonstrating a statistically significant positive impact on at least one child outcome.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Let’s Play in Tandem</i> • <i>Raising Early Achievement in Literacy Project (REAL)</i> <p>Plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Child First (primarily aimed at improving attachment, but with improvements in language after one year in programme)</i>
<p>Preliminary (EIF rating = 2/2+) Pilot study demonstrating a statistically significant positive impact on at least one child outcome with sufficiently large and representative sample (>20 participants, representing at least 60%) & independently validated measures.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Getting Ready</i> • <i>Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY)</i> • <i>Learning Together Programme – Foundation PEEP: 3s level</i> • <i>Learning Together Programme – Foundation PEEP: 4s level</i> • <i>Lidcombe Program</i> • <i>Parents as (first) Teachers (PAFT)</i> • <i>Reach out and Read (ROR)</i>
<p>No evidence yet at Level 2 (EIF rating = NL2) No direct evidence about the scale of impact of the programme at a “preliminary” level.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Bookstart Baby</i> • <i>Bookstart Corner</i> • <i>Born to Move</i> • <i>It Takes Two to Talk</i> • <i>Kaleidoscope Play & Learn</i> • <i>Learning Together Programme – Early PEEP: 1s level</i> • <i>Learning Together Programme – Early PEEP: 2s level</i> • <i>Learning Together Programme – Early PEEP: Baby PEEP</i> • <i>TalkAbility</i> • <i>Target Word</i>
<p>Found not to be effective in at least one rigorously conducted study (NE) At least one high-quality evaluation (level 3 RCT/QED) indicating no benefits for children or parents.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Let’s Learn Language</i>
Features of evidence-based cognitive programmes	
REAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targets children aged 3–5 years over a 12–18-month period • Delivered by qualified teachers • Home visits and group sessions approximately every three weeks • Focus: strategies to support early literacy development • Outcome: improved literacy and letter recognition.
Let’s Play in Tandem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targets children aged 3 years over a one-year period • Delivered by qualified teachers • Weekly home visits and centre-based sessions • Focus: scaffolding early learning and behaviour • Outcome: improved school readiness skills including listening and communication.