

HELLO Greater Manchester

Final report

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The National Literacy Trust's Helping Early Language and Literacy Outcomes (HELLO) improvement framework is a quality improvement tool for early years settings who want to improve their communication, language and literacy provision.

The self-evaluation framework provides prompts, critical questions and resources to help settings identify their strengths and areas for development. The framework examines the following three key areas:

- partnerships with parents
- skilled practitioners
- enabling environments

The National Literacy Trust (NLT) was commissioned to deliver training and support in the use of HELLO by Greater Manchester Combined Authority who are working to raise the levels of speech, language and communication amongst pre-school children through the Greater Manchester SLCN pathway. The HELLO initiative ran from April 2018 until July 2019 as part of a raft of Early Years SLC initiatives across health and social care framed by the pathway.

Throughout the project, NLT made clear how the HELLO framework aligned with existing speech, language and communication programmes and resources already embedded in settings, and signposted to other initiatives available to practitioners in the local area. Supporting the joining up of local services was an important part of the process.

This report is divided into two parts: Part A describing the background and the process of the project and Part B, the evaluation report.

Part A: Process report

How HELLO was developed

The HELLO framework was developed from a programme that National Literacy Trust ran with five early years teaching schools and two local authority early years teams. National Literacy Trust received funding from the Department for Education to pilot the HELLO improvement framework and test it fully with 74 early years settings across England between April 2015 and March 2016.

The HELLO audit tool comprises three questions to prompt discussion and create a clear action plan of how settings would seek to improve: 'what we do now', 'what we need to do next' and 'who will do it and by when?' These questions prompt practitioners to think about what they do well but also what gaps exist in their provision whilst also evidencing points made. Through this self-reflection process, while completing the HELLO tool, practitioners devise their action plan with support from National Literacy Trust resources relevant to each area of the tool, to provide ideas of what settings could do next. Further resources are available online through National Literacy Trust membership, and a dedicated locally-based project manager provides email, phone and face-to-face support. The HELLO programme supports further reflection through network meetings and case studies, so settings can evaluate the impact of any improvements they make. The self-evaluation can be completed as a whole team exercise or undertaken by a senior lead or manager.

HELLO in Greater Manchester

Improving school readiness is one of the Mayor of Greater Manchester's four key priority areas. In order to make an impact on school readiness figures, GMCA have strategically targeted resources and programmes towards two-to-four years olds who have the biggest contextual risk to a low school readiness score including weak parental engagement, poor language and literacy skills and the lack of an enriched home learning environment.

The aim of this project was to target the HELLO framework resource and accompanying training at providers of the two, three and four year old offer across the ten local authorities in Greater Manchester. We specifically targeted the most deprived wards in areas where the reception school readiness measure is below 60% GLD (good level of development).

All ten local authorities were approached and the HELLO training and framework discussed at length. Five local authorities took up the HELLO programme in full, with the remaining authorities opting not to engage within the project timescale mainly due to the similarity with local initiatives already running (see table below). However, two of the local authorities that did not engage attended a final presentation and showed interest in using HELLO in the future to address partnership with parents in their early years settings.

Local authority	No. of settings trained in use of HELLO	No. of practitioners attending training
Rochdale	23	34
Manchester	39	64
Salford	14	24
Tameside	26	42
Bury	14	27
Totals	116	191

Bolton	Did not engage due to a number of other initiatives in place and a well-established communication pathway. Procurement process was underway during project timescale preventing engagement.
Trafford	Did not engage due to already established communication and language accreditation process called <i>Giving Voice</i> , which includes intensive Elklan training, and support from local SLTs.
Wigan	Did not engage due to already established <i>Keys for Communication</i> initiative, which includes an audit, training, and action planning support very similar to HELLO.
Oldham	Did not engage initially due to alternative EY SLC provision through Opportunity Area initiatives. However, at the SaLT Lead meeting, they expressed interest in <i>Partnership with Parents</i> element of HELLO to use at a later date.
Stockport	Stockport local authority were initially interested but concerned about an overlap with an audit tool they were already using, which also includes a section on environments, practitioners and parents. This tool, although similar, was lacking in detail and prompts for practitioner reflection, so HELLO participation was further encouraged. Stockport asked to delay implementation to 2019. Conversations included a specific interest in the <i>Partnership with Parents</i> element and although we approached Early Years Quality Assurance and SaLT teams to encourage later take up of the offer, timings did not work for Stockport but they hope to take this up at a later date.

National Literacy Trust undertook a mapping exercise to establish S&L initiatives that were already taking place in each authority and worked closely with each LA to establish useful and beneficial links with any training they were offering. This ensured that the HELLO tool worked as a framework to audit existing initiatives and practice, rather than being seen as a separate entity or another intervention. This exercise took a different form in each local authority depending on how far local teams were in rolling out their communication pathway, and what training settings had already accessed from their local training offer. For example, in some areas this process formed an opportunity to promote a new pathway and direct practitioners to additional training, and in others where the pathway was well established, using HELLO was seen mainly as a way to reflect, evaluate and evidence the changes already happening through a wider context of initiatives already taking place.

Delivery

191 practitioners from 116 settings were trained in using the HELLO improvement framework in a three-hour training session. 16 training sessions in total took place across the five local authority areas.

Each setting was encouraged to complete two action plans: one on Partnership with Parents (mandatory) and the other chosen from Skilled Practitioners or Enabling Environments, dependent on settings' needs. 114 action plans were received in total.

Practitioners were invited to share their action plans at a network meeting. In practice, this meeting also acted as a support for those settings that needed a reminder or found the action planning process difficult. Nine network meetings took place across the five local authority areas and practitioners shared their successes and challenges. They also received guidance on how to complete the case study which concluded the programme. Practitioners who required further support were visited in person by the locally-based National Literacy Trust project manager or given tailored, individual support through phone calls and email discussions.

As we were able to work more closely than originally anticipated with the five local authorities who took up the offer, a deeper dive of support was employed in response to practitioner need. This deeper dive culminated in five celebration/handover events in each local authority to ensure all local partners were joined up in their support of language and communication and that HELLO could be used as a sustainable, ongoing audit tool for settings to further improve their practice.

The strategic alignment of HELLO with existing provision from SALT and QA teams has been key to ensuring the success and impact of the programme. SALT and QA teams expressed how useful they had found the opportunities to join up and to make links with PVLs. The high level of support from Michelle Morris (Consultant Speech and Language Therapist / Clinical Lead for Enhanced Service Development / Designated Clinical Officer – Salford CCG) from the

outset meant that National Literacy Trust was introduced to all the key people delivering the SLCN Pathway in the local authorities where we delivered HELLO. This ensured that the National Literacy Trust initiative complemented and supported previous work that had been undertaken around SLCN and signposted practitioners to the support and other initiatives and professional development available to them in GM from SALT and QA teams going forward.

Settings' action plans

The project involved settings in creating action plans as a result of using the HELLO tool. This encouraged immediate application of what the practitioners had learnt in a meaningful and highly tailored way. We received a total of 114 action plans across Greater Manchester. They varied greatly in approach all being unique to their setting and dependent on which area the setting felt was important following the HELLO audit, the pre-existing S&L initiatives and the approach already present within the setting. Settings were asked to complete two action plans, one of which should focus on Section A: Partnership with parents and another focusing on either Section B: Skilled practitioners or Section C: Enabling environments.

Some actions emerged as more frequently identified and implemented across the settings:

- Setting up **parent visiting sessions** as the predominant approach in attempting to engage and support parents in supporting their child's speech and language development
- Sending home a range of **resources for parents** to use, including those to support multilingual families
- Strengthening **speech and language assessment skills** and approaches including peer on peer observations as well as use of tools such as Wellcomm and Elklan
- Linking up with local **libraries**
- Creating **enabling environments**: from revamping book corners to a complete overhaul of environmental approach with an initiative like 'The Curiosity Project' or 'In the Moment' planning

Ongoing challenges for settings

The main challenge settings encountered was engaging parents who may have many other pressing concerns. Settings became aware that there is no easy way to engage all parents and that it takes considerable persistence and experimentation. Some settings told us that their actions were not always successful in engaging parents.

For example:

“Initially only one parent joined us and the following session nobody at all stayed. I shortened the session to 10 minutes, thinking this might encourage more parents to attend, but they were still unable to attend sessions in the morning.”

The case studies show that the lack of parental engagement can lead to a decrease in confidence and morale amongst the staff. For example, one setting wrote:

“The staff worked hard putting the packs together and put a lot of thought into them. They enjoyed doing it but were very disheartened when some parents still didn’t engage.”

This demonstrates that overcoming the barrier of parental disengagement due to other commitments was more difficult than expected for practitioners. Settings that had some success engaging parents shared ‘lessons learnt’ through network meetings, and it is recommended that this continues.

Many settings experienced challenges around the implementation of action plans. This may be a result of whether the HELLO training and action planning was cascaded through a nursery management structure. If practitioners attended training and embarked on using HELLO alone, discussion at the network meetings highlighted that they faced challenges such as getting others to implement actions or getting time at staff meetings to explain HELLO. The table below shows figures for whether management or practitioners attended the training. (It should be noted that sometimes Room Leaders, but not management attended, which allowed them to roll out HELLO quite successfully within their specific room.)

LA	Practitioner(s) only attended training	Management present at training
Rochdale	5	11
Manchester	14	25
Salford	5	8
Tameside	17	9
Bury	7	6

Sustainability planning

Due to the appetite for a continuation of sharing best practice around parental engagement, the HELLO celebration/handover events were created with practical help for parental

engagement in mind. Not all settings were accessing the parental engagement resources provided through online NLT membership, so these were printed into a hard copy resource pack for all practitioners that had taken part in the HELLO training. The resources included all the themes covered in action plans: play, talk, rhyme, song and game ideas aimed at parents, as well as reading encouragement ideas including story sacks, chatter box ideas and activities. Practitioners were also provided with a separate bilingual quick tips pack, with resources covering these themes translated into 15 languages. These were incredibly well received, with overwhelming positive feedback from settings, SaLT and local authority Early Years Quality Assurance teams, many of whom asked to include these resources on their Facebook pages.

Most settings chose to focus on Enabling Environments, rather than Skilled Practitioners, as their additional action plan. This may be due to the fact that a change to a physical space, similarly to the creation of a resource to send home with parents, is a more easily implementable action, with a visible output. On the other hand, encouraging behaviour change in staff and improving their skills may be seen as more laborious and harder to monitor. However, this area of professional development is vitally important. Therefore, an example of an excellent case study on upskilling practitioners was included in the resource pack handed out at the handover events, to encourage settings to focus on this section in their next steps using HELLO, now that they have become confident in its use.

Although the handover events had a similar format, joining up with the local teams took on a unique form depending on local authority needs, their present focus and current stage in their S&L pathway development. We worked with each local authority and their SaLT and Early Years QA teams in order to plan an event and handover that linked with and complimented local aims and focus.

The handover events were also designed with sustainability in mind. Clear links were made between the resources included in the HELLO framework and other speech and language initiatives running within their local area; and how settings could continue to use HELLO to evaluate future initiatives and the local support that is available to them while they do so. A spreadsheet of all settings that had undertaken HELLO training with details of how far they had progressed with their improvement planning, plus completed action plans and case studies, were shared with local teams so that they are able to follow up with settings where needed.

The table below shows who National Literacy Trust worked with in each local area to support this joined up approach.

Local authority	NLT worked together with these key people	Links/local teams next steps for HELLO
Manchester	<p><i>Nasreen King - Early Years Strategic Lead</i></p> <p><i>Gill Blackwell - Senior Quality Assurance Officer</i></p> <p><i>Julie Ashworth - Speech and Language Therapist Surestart Team Lead</i></p> <p><i>Cheryl Pridgeon / Margaret Duff - Service Development Specialist / Read Manchester Project Manager</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SaLT have NLT membership, HELLO tool and resource packs for their future use. • Quality Assurance team have taken resource packs and blank certificates to give to settings who were unable to attend or complete their case study after the deadline. They have also received details of all settings involved in HELLO for follow up. • HELLO case studies may form an element of the S&L setting accreditation criteria in future – TBC by Julie Ashworth’s team. • The Wellcomm Communications Champions will be encouraged to take HELLO next steps forward within HELLO settings – TBC by Julie Ashworth’s team. • Potential future links to Early Words Together at Two, which is already running in some Manchester children’s centres, are being explored.
Salford	<p><i>Margaret Gun - Starting Life Well, Senior Quality Development Advisor</i></p> <p><i>Dawn Fenton - Speech and Language Therapist Team Lead</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication Development Workers all given access to NLT membership and will provide resources to settings during visits. • Communication Development Workers to follow up with HELLO settings that have not completed their case studies. • There are currently problem solution focus meetings with SaLT/Early Years QA – a HELLO continuation will be placed on this agenda and discussed with both teams. • All action plans and case studies as well as a spreadsheet containing settings involvement with HELLO have been passed over to Dawn Fenton.
Bury	<p><i>Collette Radcliffe - Lead Officer Children's Centre Operations</i></p> <p><i>Sharon Walton - Early Years Quality Officer</i></p> <p><i>Kirsten Brooks - Speech and Language Therapist Team Lead</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Years Quality Assurance will be placing HELLO tools, documents and resources on their Early Years website/Facebook page to support practitioners. • Certificates and resources passed over, so that settings who were unable to make it can collect them from Bury Early Years team. • Early Years Quality Assurance to signpost non HELLO settings to HELLO to support them with their speech and language and communication provision, particularly during Early Years pre Ofsted support and post inspection support. Partnership with Parents resources will be promoted. • EY Quality Assurance to create a communication network, where settings could hear from a PVI that has completed HELLO; PVI that uses Wellcomm, etc. • Early Years Quality Assurance to include HELLO in the annual visit pack and signpost to good practice. • Consider using Section B to assist Wellcomm.

<p>Rochdale</p>	<p><i>Julia Henry A - Early Years & Childcare Advisory Team Manager</i></p> <p><i>Francesca Ellis - Speech and Language Therapist Team Lead</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Words Together at Two is an option for some settings struggling with parental engagement. This is already running in some Children's Centres around Rochdale as historically, they were trained in it. • HELLO will now be included in communication network meetings, run by Quality Assurance. SaLT will also come along to these meetings. • All action plans/case studies sent to Julia Henry in Early Years team. HELLO tool, S&L book and resources shared with SaLT and Quality Assurance team. Early Years informed when settings have dropped out and why and overall setting spreadsheet shared with EY and SaLT.
<p>Tameside</p>	<p><i>Catherine Soutter - Early Years Quality Officer</i></p> <p><i>Janet Perry – Early Years Team Manager</i></p> <p><i>Sharon Scholes - Early Years Quality Officer Practice Manager</i></p> <p><i>Shannon O'Connor - Speech and Language Therapist Team Lead</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interested in potential of HELLO forming part of the nursery to reception transition process and work in Tameside, as discussed by Moorside School Reception class teacher. • Will use bilingual quick tips and some parental resources provided on the Tameside QA website/Facebook pages. • Tameside Early Years QA team will run general communication network, to continue sharing best practice in speech and language, HELLO updates will form a part of this, and will be used as an ongoing tool. • SaLT and Early Years QA team to reference parental engagement resources and to discuss HELLO with settings as a solution to measure S&L initiatives. • Janet Perry to encourage Early Years QA to include HELLO in the audit visits e.g. have you used the critical questions, have you done any sessions plans etc... • SaLT team to hand out Talking Together business cards with all reports.

Part B: Evaluation

Part B shows that use of the HELLO framework evidences significant impact across a range of outcomes. Six of the key findings alongside key statistics are highlighted in the table below:

Practitioner outcomes		
1	Practitioners are more likely to engage and involve parents in their child's language and communication development	Practitioners are four times more likely to engage with parents to ensure that parents understand the benefits of talking, listening, singing and sharing stories with their children.
2	Practitioners engage more frequently in behaviours that demonstrate knowledge and skills in supporting children's communication and language	<p>An additional 35% of practitioners now make use of "labelling" on a daily basis, which entails providing labels for familiar and unfamiliar actions, physical objects, and abstractions e.g. feelings or emotions.</p> <p>An extra 25% of practitioners now pause more regularly, to encourage the active participation and turn taking with the child.</p>
3	Practitioners are more likely to implement actions to create an enabling environment that stimulates communication and language	<p>An additional 44% of practitioners now ensure every day that there is space for privacy and quiet areas where the children can engage in "down time".</p> <p>There was a 33% increase in the number of practitioners who now ensure that "learning areas are clearly labelled".</p>
Child and parent outcomes		
4	Improved children's attainment in language and communication	Almost 1 in 3 settings (20 case-studies) make specific reference to an increase in language and communication attainment.
5	Improved attitudes towards early literacy	As many as 10 settings explicitly mentioned in their case-study how they have witnessed the children enjoying books more.
6	Greater parental engagement in their child's language and communication development	Almost one in three (20 of 62) settings talked about how there was an increase in parental engagement with the activities in the setting.

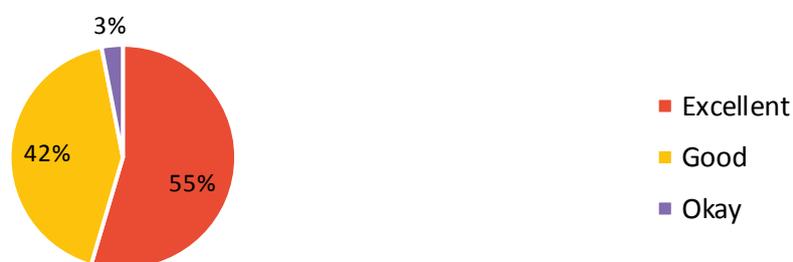
This evaluation

A rigorous evaluation strategy was developed to monitor the impact of the use of HELLO and to understand better how it was employed by different settings (please see Appendix A for more information). This report presents findings from a range of tools. Firstly, it looks at the training feedback, which was completed by 99 practitioners. Secondly, it looks at the findings that relate to change in practitioner behaviour. These were mainly gathered through pre- and post-surveys, which were based on the responses of 74 practitioners. Lastly, 62 case studies were analysed to explore the outcomes for participating children and parents.

Training feedback

The training was highly rated by practitioners. As Figure 1 shows, 97% of practitioners rated the training as either excellent (55%) or good (42%).

Figure 1: Overall rating of training



Not only did the vast majority of practitioners rate the training highly, they would also recommend it to other schools or settings: 97% of practitioners said that they would recommend the HELLO training to others, while the remaining 3% might do so.

Feedback from the practitioners about specific aspects of the training was equally positive (see Figure 2). More than 4 in 5 (81%) practitioners agreed that the training enhanced their understanding of communication and language development. Crucially, we observed that this led to changes in practice. For example, one participant told us that “thinking about communication, made me think about my actions”.

Figure 2: Practitioner responses on whether the training has “Improved their understanding of the children’s language and communication development”



Above all, the training was effective in achieving its main purpose, upskilling practitioners to make use of the HELLO improvement tool in their setting. The training feedback showed that 9 in 10 practitioners (89%) agree that the training was effective at improving practitioners' understanding of the HELLO tool (see Figure 3). This finding is reinforced by the fact that when asked what was the most useful part of the training, the majority of practitioners gave answers around the theme of their improved understanding of HELLO. For example, one practitioner wrote: "Understanding HELLO more has helped improve my setting and myself", whilst another practitioner wrote: "Delivery of HELLO – great practical tool that pulls all interventions together".

Figure 3: Practitioners' responses on whether the training has "Improved their understanding of the HELLO improvement tool"



Cascading the training:

The training feedback survey also provided evidence that the majority of practitioners feel confident to cascade the HELLO training with other members of staff in their setting using the resources provided by the National Literacy Trust. As shown in Figure 4, almost 9 in 10 (87%) of practitioners agreed that they felt confident cascading the HELLO training.

Figure 4: Practitioners' responses to whether they "feel confident cascading this information to other members of the team using National Literacy Trust resources"



Several of the case studies discussed how they valued the tools they had mastered in the training so much that they were planning to share what they had learnt with their colleagues. Many settings wrote about how they had cascaded the training within their setting or were planning to cascade it in future. For example, one setting wrote:

“The aim is for the manager to **cascade training** down for ideas and strategies given during an early year’s forum. This will then able to key workers to have the tools and equipment to deliver new key group time to encourage children’s listening, language and understanding skills.”

This is an extremely encouraging response. In other implementations of HELLO that the National Literacy Trust has run, we have found that cascading has been a challenge for staff in PVI settings. The success of the cascading bodes well for the sustained improvement of settings.

Outcomes

As part of our evaluation, we asked practitioners how often they had engaged in specific behaviours before and after they took part in the CPD programme. These behaviours were all focused on promoting early language and communication development and could be categorised into three main themes:

1. Practitioners’ behaviours to engage and involve parents,
2. Practitioners’ knowledge and skills,
3. Actions to create an enabling environment.

The pre- and post- practitioner data suggest that the programme has been effective in stimulating changes and improvements in practitioner behaviour within each of these themes.

To complement this quantitative data, the evaluation framework required participating practitioners to report on the use of HELLO through case study submission. The case studies offer in-depth qualitative data which demonstrates that the changes in practitioner behaviour translated into positive outcomes within the settings.

Practitioners were asked to report on how they had identified the main barrier in their setting, what actions they had taken and finally, what was the impact of the work. Through these case studies it was clear that the HELLO tool was effective in supporting settings to achieve a range of outcomes which included:

- Improving language and communication attainment within the settings
- Improving attitudes towards early literacy within the settings
- Improving parental engagement
- Improving practitioners knowledge and skills

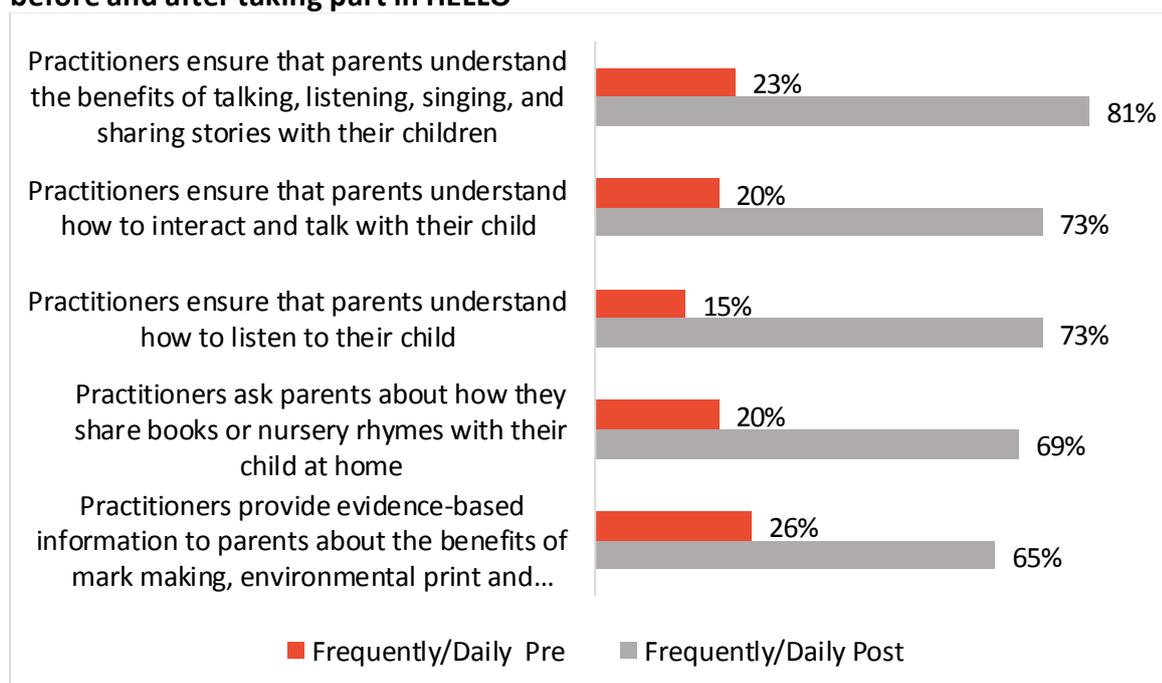
Finding 1: Practitioners are more likely to engage and involve parents in their child’s language and communication development

As a result of the use of HELLO to make improvements in practice, practitioners are more likely to engage in positive behaviours with parents to promote a stimulating home learning environment. Of the three main areas that HELLO attempts to tackle, this was the area where settings were performing the worst before the start of the programme. In fact, the pre-survey responses show that the majority of practitioners did not engage in activities to involve parents on a regular basis.

Figure 5 features an analysis of the data for five behaviours relating to the theme of parental engagement. By looking at the pre- and post-responses it was possible to see what percentage of practitioners told us that they engage in these behaviours “frequently” or “daily”. For the purpose of the analysis, these two categories were merged to get an idea of what portion of practitioners engage in these actions “frequently/daily” (see Figure 5).

Figure 5 shows that practitioners are much more likely to engage parents and discuss ways to create a positive home learning environment. These activities relate specifically to actions practitioners may take to improve parental knowledge and awareness of what a positive home learning environment entails. For instance, as a result of the programme, practitioners are almost four times more likely to engage with parents to “ensure that parents understand the benefits of talking, listening, singing and sharing stories with their children” (23% to 81%). Following the use of HELLO, practitioners are also almost five times more likely to “ensure that parents understand how to listen to their child” (15% to 73%). Whilst, three times as many practitioners “ask parents about how they share books and nursery rhymes with their child at home” (20% to 60%).

Figure 5. Change in percentage of practitioners that engage in these behaviours frequently before and after taking part in HELLO

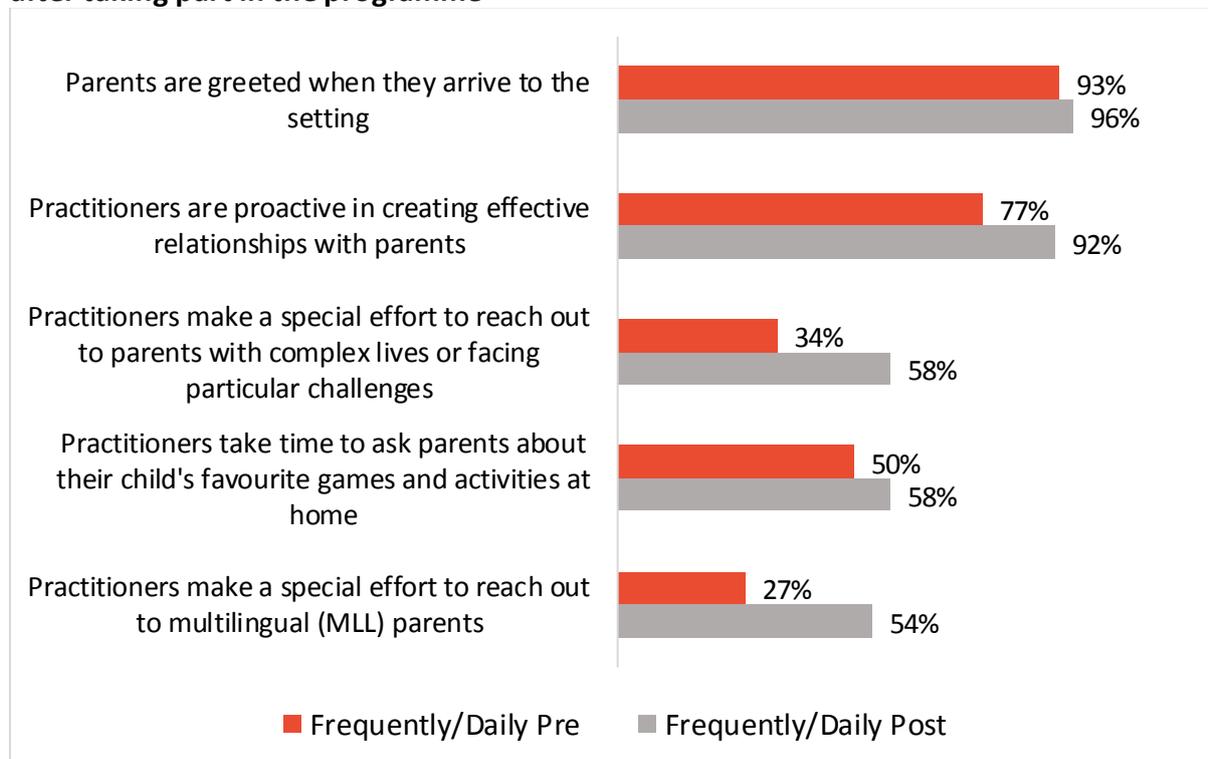


The data also suggest that practitioners are engaging more in specific behaviours to build relationship with parents (see Figure 6). Practitioners are specifically attempting to engage with parents who require additional support. For example, twice as many practitioners (from 27% to 54%) now “make a special effort to engage with multilingual parents”. Moreover, an additional 70% of practitioners now make an effort to reach out to parents with “complex lives or facing particular challenges”.

The change in practitioner behaviour around engaging with multilingual parents on regular basis seems to have been effective in supporting the development of EAL children. Numerous case studies discuss how as a result of actions, multilingual parents showed increase involvement with the setting. One case-study discusses how as a result of better EAL parental involvement one child showed good progress in their language and communication development:

“Using the Talk Books had a positive impact from all angles. Generally parents loved the idea of the Talk Books and one parent was thrilled about this because she had pictures ready to go in! From the Talk Books being used the children started to feel confident communicating in front of large groups. One family with a Polish background had started to bring their child’s confidence up to eventually start speaking to adults and their friends in the setting. We found that some of our children had made good progress in the Communication and Language and Literacy brackets of the EYFS.”

Figure 6. Percentage of practitioners that engage in these behaviours frequently before and after taking part in the programme



Finding 2: Practitioners engage more frequently in behaviours that demonstrate knowledge and skills in supporting children’s communication and language

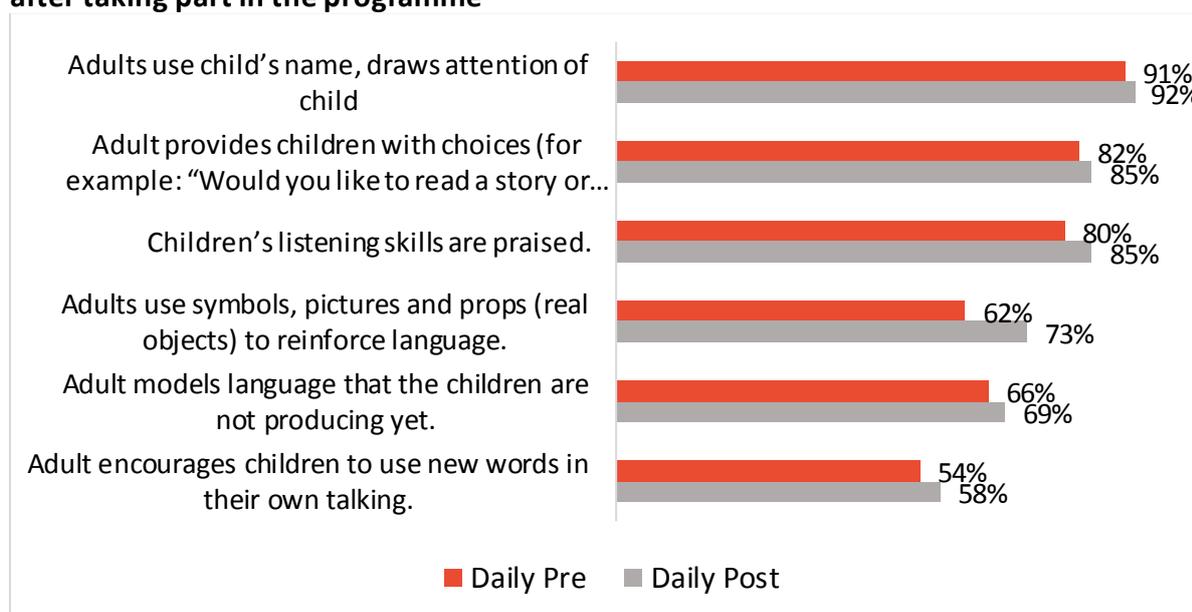
The data also indicates that using HELLO has supported practitioners to develop their knowledge and skills: practitioners report that they engage more frequently in behaviours that support the development of language and communication amongst the children in their settings.

It is worth noting that the improvements in this theme are not as striking as within the theme of “engaging parents”, mainly because the majority of practitioners reported that they were already carrying out these actions most of the time or quite often in the pre- data. For instance, in the pre-survey, 91% of practitioner reported that they “use the child’s name or drew attention to the children” on a daily basis. Thus, because the practitioners were already scoring highly on these questions, there was less room for improvement.

Due to the fact that practitioners were already engaging in these behaviours comparatively frequently this section of the analysis will focus on the change in percentage of practitioners who now engage in these behaviours “daily”.

Figure 7 presents the data that relate to the change in frequency in behaviours that practitioners may engage with to encourage and support the child’s language and communication development. Across all of these fields, more practitioners report that they now engage in these behaviours on a daily basis after the HELLO training and implementing actions. For example, an additional 17% of practitioners now “use symbols, props and real objects to reinforce language”.

Figure 7. Percentage of practitioners that engage in these behaviours frequently before and after taking part in the programme

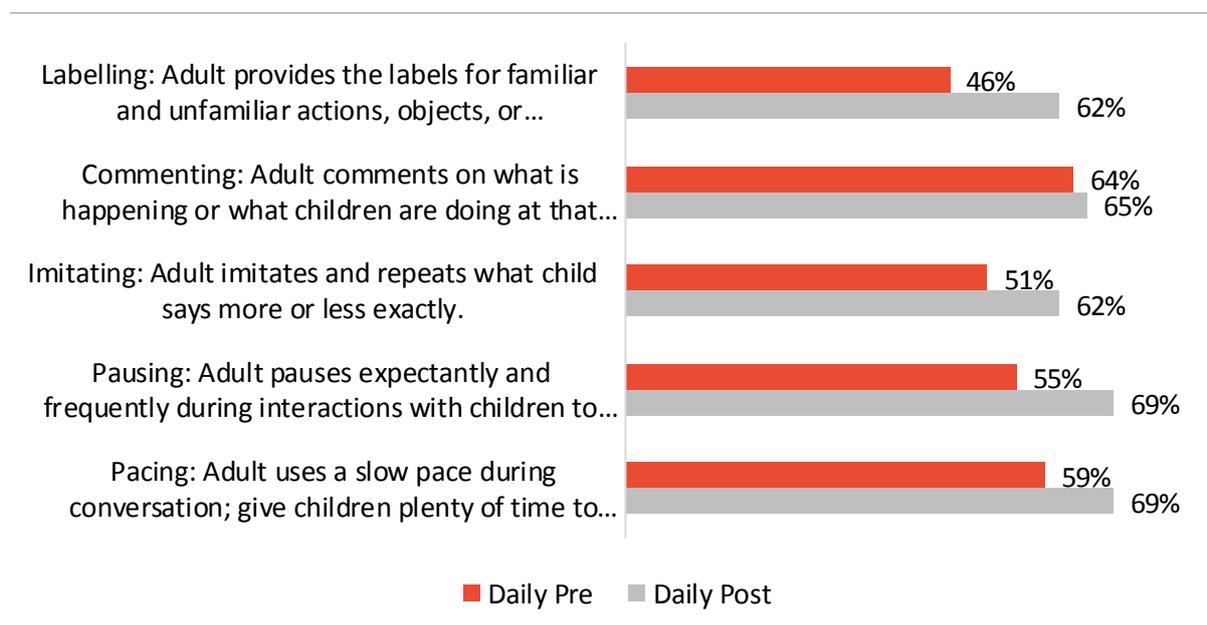


The data presented above shows that practitioners are still not very prone to “model language that the children are not producing yet”, or encouraging to “use new word in their own talking”. Despite a small improvement HELLO was less effective in promoting these behaviours as opposed to others. This might be an interesting learning point for the future implementation of HELLO. Based on these findings it is recommended that these specific activities are looked at more closely by the SALT teams within the settings.

Figure 8 outlines seven techniques which are considered to be best practices for early year practitioners who seek to support language and communication development. Through the monitoring tool, we can see that following the use of HELLO, more practitioners now engage more frequently in all of these positive behaviours.

An additional 35% of practitioners now make use of “labelling” on a daily basis, which entails providing labels for familiar and unfamiliar actions, physical objects, and abstractions e.g. feelings or emotions. An extra 25% of practitioners now pauses more regularly, to encourage the active participation and turn taking with the child. 22% more practitioners now imitate what the child says exactly, and 17% more practitioners now pace the conversation in order give the child plenty of time to respond and take turns.

Figure 8. Percentage of practitioners that engage in these behaviours frequently before and after taking part in the programme



These findings were strengthened by the qualitative data that was captured in the case studies. Numerous case studies discussed how practitioners’ skills developed following the implementation of improvements using HELLO. Several of the settings discussed how it gave staff new methods and approaches to stimulate language and literacy opportunities for their children.

One setting discussed how the staff is using specific tools and techniques acquired as a result of the training:

“This was a huge increase in staff using non-verbal methods to communicate with children. Some children have been tracked too high previously, and by using supporting documents such as the “Universally Speaking” this has given practitioners a clearer picture of a child’s stage of development.”

Another setting discussed increase in staff confidence, and in particular, how practitioners are better at identifying children in need:

“Staff are more confident in selecting and carrying out activities which involves speech and language and are now identifying (if any) children that need extra support in this area.”

Finding 3: Practitioners are more likely to implement actions to create an enabling environment that stimulates communication and language

The practitioner survey also seems to suggest that after using HELLO to audit and plan to improve provision, staff in settings do more to ensure that the children are stimulated by the learning environment. Figure 9 looks at the different actions that practitioners could take in order to ensure that areas in the setting have a designated purpose, and are used effectively in order to support the language communication and development of children.

Practitioners now pay more attention to how different areas are being utilised across the setting. For example, an additional 44% of practitioners now ensure every day that there is space for privacy and quiet areas where the children can engage in “down time”. Additionally, there was a 33% increase in the number of practitioners who now ensure that “learning areas are clearly labelled”.

Figure 9. Percentage of practitioners that engage in these behaviours frequently before and after taking part in the programme

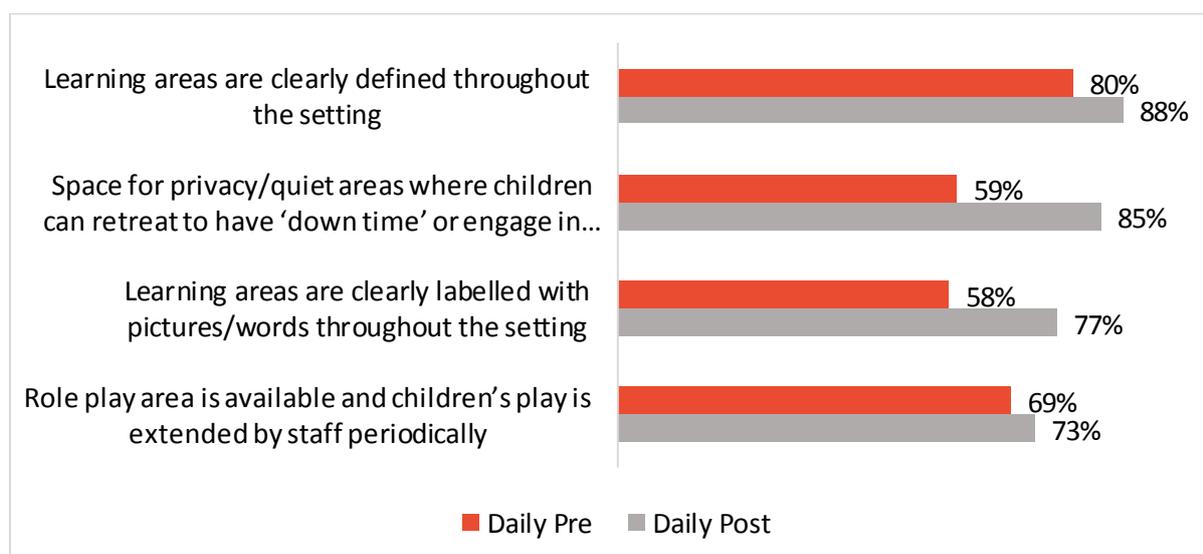


Figure 10 below shows how use of the HELLO tool has encouraged practitioners to make environmental changes to the settings and to the structure of activities, so that the setting can become a more enabling environment. In terms of changes to the way activities are conducted, we see that the use of HELLO has had an impact in this area. 28% more practitioners ensure on a daily basis that activities are “led by the interest of children”, and the same portion of practitioners now give children opportunities to engage in conversation with adults more frequently.

The graph also shows that practitioners have taken actions in order to ensure that the setting is more enabling and soothing from a sensorial perspective, by managing light and noise. In fact, 32% more practitioners now ensure that the setting is well lit daily, and an additional 13% ensure that the noise levels are managed throughout the day so that children and practitioners can easily hear each other.

Figure 10. Percentage of practitioners that engage in these behaviours frequently before and after taking part in the programme

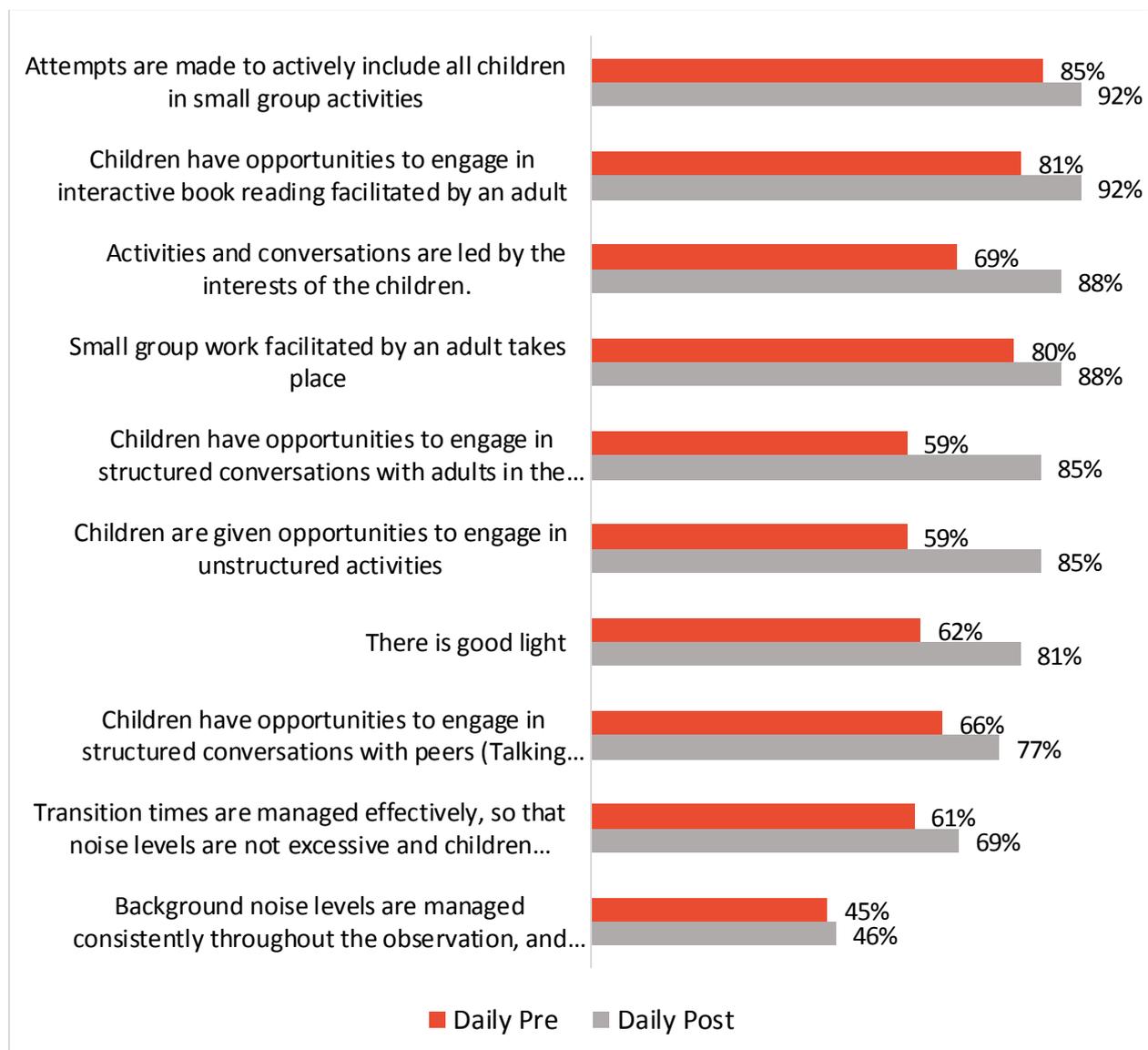
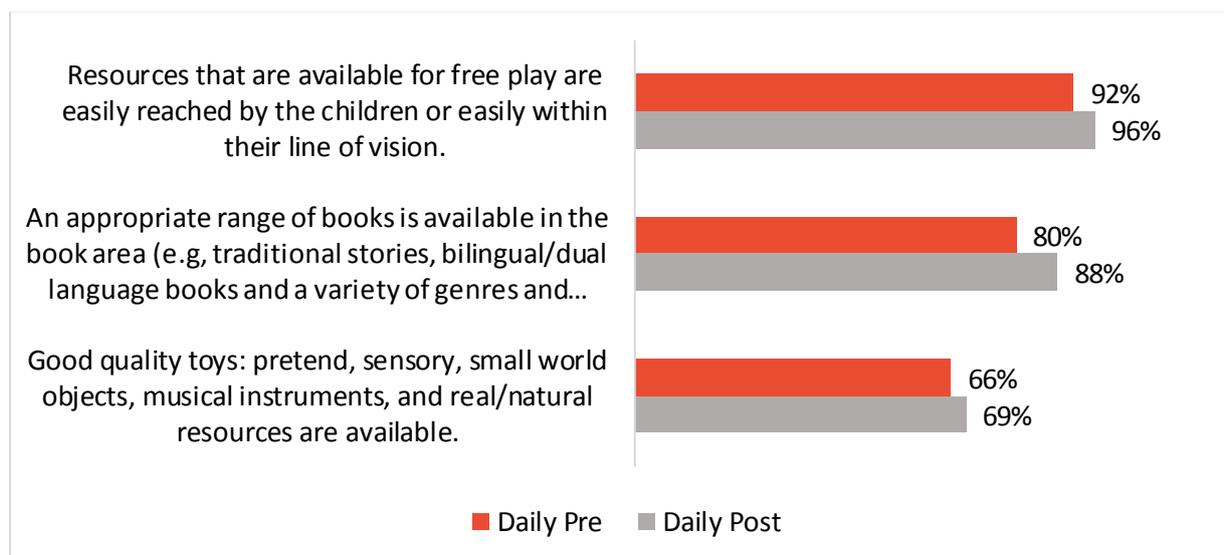


Figure 11 looks at how practitioners have taken actions to create a stimulating learning environment through different resources. For example, an additional 10% of practitioners now ensure more frequently that an appropriate range of books is available in the book area, including traditional stories, bilingual/dual-language books, a variety of genres, and books relating to the children’s own experiences.

Figure 11. Percentage of practitioners that engage in these behaviours frequently before and after taking part in the programme



It is clear that following the HELLO audit and improvements, practitioners in Greater Manchester are more likely to ensure that their settings offers a stimulating environment to support language and communication development. This has been done through a variety of ways, which include ensuring that: each areas has a designated purpose, the setting is pleasant from a sensorial perspective, activities are conducted following best practice, and finally that adequate resources are available.

Finding 4: Improved children’s attainment in language and communication

Settings discussed many positive impacts on the children as a result of their actions to improve provision using HELLO. It should be noted that the data is very heterogeneous, which suggests that the diversity of action plans may have yielded very different results within each setting.

Within each of the three themes (engaging parents, practitioner skills, and enabling environments) there are multiple examples of the positive impact on the children’s language and communication attainment. Almost 1 in 3 case studies (20 case-studies) make specific reference to an increase in language and communication attainment. Many of these evidence the impact of improvements in provision by showing how WellComm scores have progressed.

A total of 13 of the case studies discuss improvement in the children's language attainment measured through WellComm scores.

This is one example of settings using attainment data to evidence improvements made through the use of HELLO. This setting discusses the impact of increased parental engagement:

"This is reflected through our data which has shown the children have progressed greatly.

This is also reflected on our children's EYFS trackers.

Children have been using words from other languages when communicating and a child with very limited language and communication skills has developed at least six new words."

Another setting wrote how their actions had successfully improved the language and communication attainment of EAL children through effective parental engagement:

"Although some of our data is showing children that with EAL not quite at their correct stage of development with language and communication, it has shown massive progression within the EYFS development. This indicates that engaging with parents may have impacted on their child's development."

Another setting provides a very good example of how the children's attainment has been positively affected as a result of creating a more enabling environment.

"Our problem was Enabling Environments..."

Our evaluation of the autumn cohort 2018 indicates communication and language issues are that:

31% of children was below the expected age for speaking. This 31% includes children with communication problems, SEN and EAL children.

On recent tracking and assessment the children who have EAL have progressed from emerging to secure at their expected level therefore 21% have reached our aim.

Children are more focused throughout the day and are using a variety of different communication and language skills.

A subsection of the case studies (7 of the 62) make specific reference to children's 'attention', and how this has been a defining factor in their increased attainment. For instance, one nursery wrote:

“... we noticed on our second visit from speech and language she was very impressed as the children attention and listening had improved dramatically with all the changes that had been made.”

Another setting also wrote about similar themes:

“We noticed in the tracking that over 85% of children have moved up an age bracket in listening and attention which could be contributed to the stay and play and taking books home regularly from nursery.”

Finding 5: Improved attitudes towards early literacy

The use of HELLO has indicated that attitudes towards literacy have improved from the perspective of the children and the parents. Multiple case studies discussed how both the parents and the children demonstrated positive attitudes towards the planned activities. Numerous case-studies mention the theme of ‘enjoyment’, talking about how the children were engaged because they showed enjoyment, enthusiasm and excitement for the ‘actions’ that had been implemented.

For almost 1 in 6 settings (10 of 62) mentioned specifically how they have witnessed an increase in reading enjoyment amongst the children.

Others discuss how, as a result of the changes implemented in the setting, the children are making more effective use of the resources available to them. For instance one nursery wrote:

“Children were instantly more attracted to the reading area... Children paid more attention to the print on the walls e.g. looking at the environmental print poster and trying to read the different names and logos. We also observed an increase in language and conversation in the reading area.”

Another setting made a very interesting remark on how the environmental changes in the settings have increased the children’s imagination:

“Since we have introduced the outdoor reading area with story stones, it has improved staff and children's conversations and their play is becoming more imaginative.”

Interestingly, many of the case studies specifically mention how the parents found the home learning activities very enjoyable. Some of these discuss how parents showed genuine interest in continuing these activities spontaneously in the home. One incredibly powerful quote from a parent reads:

“...with the hours I work I find it really hard to spend time with my child as I work full time. But when we did this activity; it brought happy tears to my eyes. Makes me realise how her speech and herself has come on so much. What she was telling me we had a proper conversation which I have missed”

Finding 6: Greater parental engagement in their child's language and communication development

Almost one in three (20 of 62) the case studies talked about how there was an increase in parental engagement with the activities in the setting. Many of the settings talked about increased communication, involvement, proactivity and interaction from the parents since they have implemented their action plans.

For instance, one case study told us:

“Over the past 3 months we have found the parents/carers have seemed to be more pro-active since we introduced the library.”

Staff from another setting said:

“Parents are now more involved in their child's learning and have become more active in the weekly planning for the pre-school room.”

A subsection of these case studies reported that they witnessed increase parental confidence as a result of increased interaction with the staff, better environments, and specific planned activities.

For example, one nursery wrote:

“The parents seem and feel a lot more confident with reading stories at home and have been thankful for having opportunities to take a new book home each week to read.

The case study included a quote from a parent who said:

“I feel a lot more confident with reading to my child at home”

Several of the case studies, including the ones presented above discuss an interesting point: many of the case studies show that providing parents with resources to take back to the home stimulated confidence through enjoyment.

Not surprisingly, the increased parental engagement goes hand in hand with mentions of improved home learning environment. Eight of the case studies talked about how the parents have been promoting didactic activities such as reading and mark making in the home. Four of the case studies provide evidence of increased frequency of reading in the home from surveys they sent home. For example:

“After the implementation of the library[in the setting] and the visit to the library parents who had previously said they don't read very often are now saying they read to their child before bed now and are also going to join the local library.”

Several of the case studies discuss that there was excitement from parents about home learning activities because of material they sent home to nudge them into these positive behaviours.

Interestingly, two case studies talked about how parents felt that the books that were sent home initially were not at an adequate level for the children. This would be an interesting point to explore further.

Limitations of the study

The main limitation of this study is that the analysis relied on self-reported data provided by practitioners, which may have biased the data for two main reasons.

Firstly, the self-reported data may have been affected by social desirability. As the survey was asking practitioners if they were engaging in certain positive behaviours, it is possible that they overstated the frequency of these interactions, thereby potentially affecting the validity of these responses.

It is important to note that this has been mitigated by concentrating the analysis on the reported shift between pre- and post- responses. If we assume that this bias has stayed constant we can say that the changes seen in self-reported behaviour still provide a meaningful indication of the impact of the programme. The qualitative data provided in the case studies may have also suffered from social desirability bias. Nonetheless, the prompts and frameworks for the case-studies invited practitioners to reflect on both their successes and failures.

Secondly, because of the pre- and post- nature of the self-completed questionnaires, it is possible that the data may have been affected by response shift bias. This implies that the practitioners may have thought that they were engaging in certain behaviours frequently, before receiving training. However, after completing the training some practitioners may have realised that they did not engage in these behaviours as frequently as they perceived. This may have led to practitioners scoring themselves too highly in the pre-intervention survey, which would mean that the impact of the programme was underrepresented in the study. It is important to acknowledge the survey attempted to contain this bias by providing specific frequency frames such as “every day” as opposed to “often”.

Conclusion and recommendations

The HELLO initiative has been successful in Greater Manchester. 191 practitioners from 116 settings have been reached. Practitioners highly rated this professional development. They have become more confident in using evidence to identify gaps in provision, plan actions to address areas of improvement, and share ideas and good practice through the joined-up

networks that have been developed during this project. The data clearly shows that this process has successfully involved parents, strengthened practitioners' skills and knowledge, and has promoted enabling environments within the participating settings. Practitioners' emerging confidence with the HELLO framework should be built upon, so that further improvements made through the wealth of speech and language initiatives available locally can be clearly evidenced, and settings ultimately provide the very best support for children's language and communication development across Greater Manchester.

We would like to make the following recommendations:

1. Some very useful work has taken place in each local authority area in coming together under an 'S&L umbrella' of both initiatives and stakeholders. In some areas, there have been discussions and meetings within the local authority that have not necessarily taken place before, for example, between Early Years Quality Assurance and SaLT teams, and this has proved invaluable. In any future use of the HELLO tool in local authority areas, it is recommended that **both a SaLT contact and an Early Years Quality Assurance contact be on board with the project from the beginning.**
2. As discussed above, the involvement of management proved beneficial in making sure action planning for improvements in provision ran smoothly setting-wide, therefore it is recommended that **managers attend HELLO training** in the future, wherever possible.
3. Time constraints were reported across all local authority areas as reasons for some settings not completing the full HELLO process and submitting a case study. Many support conversations encouraged practitioners to place certain action points into their next steps, in order to make current action planning more concise and quicker to implement. Therefore, it is recommended that **practitioners continue to use the HELLO tool** to action their next steps and enter into a habit of repeating the cycle as part of their continuous improvement.
4. Whilst not necessary for all settings, some could have benefitted from completing one HELLO section at a time to allow practitioners to digest the auditing information. Going forward, it is recommended that **local authorities select one section according to their current objective.** This recommendation is already being considered: for example, Bury LA are interested in focussing on the Skilled Practitioners section and using the tool to help all practitioners evaluate their practice in rolling out Wellcomm; and Stockport and Oldham have both expressed interest in using the single section on Partnership with Parents in the future.
5. Following discussions with Michelle Morris and SaLT colleagues, we explored the issue of engaging parents earlier, prior to their child starting nursery, in order to engage those who might not access early years provision at all, or to encourage greater and more confident engagement when a child starts in a setting. We would recommend

local authorities **continue to signpost to National Literacy Trust's *Small Talk* micro-site** which is designed to be easily accessed by all parents on a mobile phone, including those with literacy barriers. It is designed for parents of children 0-5. In addition, we recommend local authorities become involved with the Department for Education's **Hungry Little Minds campaign**, which we have recently been commissioned to support.

Appendix A

A mixed methods approach was developed which included both quantitative data and qualitative data. Data was collected through three main tools:

Tool	What is it measuring?	Responses
Training Feedback	Collecting a mix of qualitative and quantitative data on the quality of the HELLO training.	99 completed
Practitioners Pre/Post Survey	Assessing whether practitioners' behaviour has changed after having taking part in the HELLO project. The survey asks practitioners to report how frequently they engaged in certain positive behaviours. The same survey was administered before the practitioners used the tool and after to see if it lead to behaviour change within the settings.	74 pre surveys completed 26 post surveys completed
Case studies	The case-studies asked practitioners to thoroughly reflect on how the impact of the HELLO tool. The case studies yielded a range of rich qualitative data which was very specific to each setting. The case studies also included setting-specific data such as survey results, and WellComm scores.	62 submitted

Value of the case studies

As part of the evaluation process, all the settings were asked to create a case study detailing the barriers they had identified, the goals they had chosen, the actions they had taken, and finally the impact of their intervention alongside some final reflections. These case studies provide rich qualitative data which has been thematically analysed.

Using this methodology, as opposed to a questionnaire, is particularly valuable because practitioners are only loosely prompted and guided, and thus we have a valid insight into the individual perception of each respondent.

The most insightful section from a project evaluation perspective, are the responses where the practitioners are asked to describe their perceived impact of the programme and reflect on it. Thus, this analysis concentrates on a thematic analysis of this section of the case studies.