

# London Early Years Campaign

Evaluation of small grant projects

September 2020



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**Greater London Authority**  
**September 2020**

### **Published by**

Greater London Authority  
City Hall  
The Queens Walk  
London SE1 2AA

**[www.london.gov.uk](http://www.london.gov.uk)**

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Minicom 020 7983 4000

### **Cover photograph**

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# 1 Executive summary

## Introduction

The Mayor's London Early Years Campaign ran from February to October 2019 and aimed to raise awareness about early years education and how it benefits children. As part of this programme, small grants were awarded to 11 organisations across London to run creative activities to engage local families in early years education. Summaries of these projects can be found on our website ([London Early Years Campaign](#)).

Through these small grants, the Mayor aimed to reach out to families and communities missing out on their entitlement, to:

- Improve awareness of free early education for 2 year olds
- Improve understanding of the benefits of early education

As part of the funding requirements, organisations were asked to self-evaluate their projects by completing a self-evaluation report template. The purpose of this template, and the evaluation, was to capture what worked and what didn't work from the London Early Years Campaign small grant projects and improve the GLA's understanding of how eligible families can be reached and engaged in early education.

Based on findings from the self-evaluation reports, and a share and learn session hosted at City Hall in October 2019, the GLA City Intelligence Unit has produced this meta-evaluation report to share learning from this grant programme across the wider sector.

## Findings

Overall, the London Early Years Campaign small grants programme achieved its intended outcomes of improving awareness and understanding of free early education and childcare. The 11 funded projects **engaged with 4,743 families** in London, of which there were 2,396 two-year olds eligible for Free Early Education (FEE). Additionally, the evaluation identified that 264 FEE places were taken up as a result of funded projects.

The limitations of the evaluation made it difficult to assess the effectiveness of different types of activities and interventions, but the evaluation did highlight some common successes among funded organisations as well as challenges. Importantly, the Early Years Grant Programme tested out different projects to engage local families with FEE and captured key learning that can be applied across the sector.

Based on the key learning captured through the evaluation, the following are key recommendations for organisations and funders seeking to engage local families with FEE.

### Recommendations for organisations engaging with FEE-eligible families

- Promote to parents the benefits of FEE for their children (e.g. child development and social skills) rather than benefits to themselves (e.g. more free time and ability to take up work).
- Address the concerns and misconceptions parents have around FEE and nurseries. Visiting nurseries, observing what they're like, and talking to nursery staff can help with this.
- Involve parents in the design and delivery of projects, so that targeted families can hear about the experiences and benefits of FEE, and debunked misconceptions, directly from parents that have used it.
- Create visual content to promote FEE. This can include clips of parents talking about FEE or images/videos inside nurseries.

- Provide one-to-one outreach and home visits where possible to help build trust with families, including directly supporting families to check for eligibility, apply for FEE, and search for nurseries and providers.
- Adapt materials and outreach for multiple languages, to maximise outreach and impact.
- Utilise other organisations, services, and events in the community that families are already engaged with.
- Encourage families to share information about FEE within their own social networks, though be cautious about asking too much from parents (e.g. asking them to become parent volunteers)
- Integrate outreach and promotion of FEE among existing related but non-FEE specific activities, e.g. around employment, health, or financial support, as opposed to talking about FEE in isolation.
- Attending community events where parents are likely to attend is a good way to engage with families that may not attend more 'formal' settings or receive information from official sources.
- Consider how to provide support or refer families who want to take up FEE outside of your geographical patch e.g. if they have a preference for a nursery elsewhere. These families should also be followed up and measured, as their FEE take up may still be a direct result of the project.

### **Recommendations for funders**

- When designing funding programmes, provide sufficient time for organisations to set up, deliver, and evaluate their projects. This should include considerations for the time required to engage and build trust with families, as well as allowing time to observe the outcomes and any lags there may be.

### **Recommendations for the wider sector**

- Encourage Early Years providers to collect data when eligible families apply for FEE places, including how they found out about FEE and what encouraged them to apply. This will be of use to the providers themselves, but also other organisations, to help assess effectiveness of outreach activities.
- Ensure lists and details of eligible families are up-to-date and easily accessible for those organisations that need it. This will allow organisations to target their outreach activities to eligible families.

## 2 Introduction

### London Early Years Campaign

#### Background to the campaign

The Mayor believes that every child in London deserves the best start in life. The quality of early years experiences lay the foundation for future success and happiness.

All too often, however, it's the poorest children who miss out. In 2019, only 56 per cent of eligible two-year olds took up a free early education (FEE) place in London, compared with 68 per cent nationally. By aged five, children entitled to free school meals are almost three months behind their better off peers.

Although he has no statutory powers related to early years, the Mayor is working with partners across the sector to improve access to high quality early years provision in London.

You can find out more about this work at [www.london.gov.uk/early-years](http://www.london.gov.uk/early-years)

#### Overview of the London Early Years Campaign

The Mayor's London Early Years Campaign ran from February to October 2019 and aimed to raise awareness about early years education and how it benefits children. Its two main strands consisted of:

- A social media campaign
- 11 Small Grant Projects, running creative activities to engage local families

This evaluation report focuses on the Small Grant Projects. You can read more about the social media campaign, and download free resources at [www.london.gov.uk/early-years](http://www.london.gov.uk/early-years)

Through the London Early Years Campaign Small Grants Projects, organisations across London had a chance to apply for grants of between £5,000 and £15,000 to run creative activities to engage local families. Through these small grants, the Mayor aimed to reach out to families and communities missing out on their entitlement, to:

- Improve awareness of free early education for 2 year olds
- Improve understanding of the benefits of early education

The projects also ultimately aimed to improve take up of free early education, although it was acknowledged from the outset that this would be difficult to achieve (and measure) given the short timeframe. Projects were encouraged to track this outcome where possible, but without any expectation that activity designed to improve awareness and understanding would result in a quick rise in take up.

Grants were awarded to 11 organisations, who ran projects between February and October 2019, across 10 London boroughs. Project summaries provided at application stage can be found on our website ([London Early Years Campaign](http://www.london.gov.uk/early-years)). In their self-evaluation reports, project leads updated these summaries to reflect any changes to their planned work. The 11 funded organisations are listed below:

- Family Lives (Westminster)
- London Borough of Ealing
- London Borough of Haringey
- London Borough of Newham
- London Borough of Redbridge
- The Limehouse Project (Tower Hamlets)

- The Lloyd Park Children's Charity (Waltham Forest)
- Manor Gardens Welfare Trust (Islington)
- Minik Kardes Ltd (Hackney)
- South London Tamil Welfare Group (Merton)
- Wheely Tots (Haringey)

## **Evaluation**

### **Overview of the evaluation**

As part of the funding requirements, organisations were asked to self-evaluate their projects by completing a self-evaluation report template. The purpose of this template, and the evaluation, was to capture what worked and what didn't work from the London Early Years Campaign small grant projects and improve the GLA's understanding of how eligible families can be reached and engaged in early education.

Based on findings from the self-evaluation reports, and the share and learn session hosted at City Hall in October 2019, the GLA City Intelligence Unit has produced this meta-evaluation report to share learning from this grant programme across the wider sector.

### **Limitations of the evaluation**

There were some key limitations of the evaluation. Firstly, the breadth and quality of self-evaluation varied by project, which limited the overall quality of data collected across the programme. This is a common challenge among grant programme evaluations when a mix of organisations and projects are funded. Given the relatively small size of the grants, organisations were also unable to allocate many resources to the evaluation of their projects. Therefore, the overall breadth and quality of data collected by organisations was limited. Secondly, the evaluation only covered the duration of the programme funding and did not include any follow-up data collection. As such, it cannot assess the sustainability and longevity of the outcomes recorded through the funded projects.

### 3 Project outcomes

Overall, the 11 funded projects engaged with 4,743 families in London, of which there were 2,396 two-year olds who were eligible for free early education (FEE). In total, at least 264 FEE places were then taken up as a result of funded projects.

<b>No. of families engaged:</b>	4,743
<b>No. of FEE eligible two-year-olds engaged:</b>	2,396

As mentioned, there were some limitations with the evaluation and some caution must therefore be taken regarding the accuracy of the numbers above. With the number of eligible two-year-olds engaged, for example, some projects reported that parents said during conversations that their children were eligible, but these were not followed up with an eligibility check.

As mentioned previously, there were three main outcomes of the grant programme:

- Improve awareness of free early education and childcare
- Improve understanding of the benefits of early education among families and communities
- Improve take up of free early education, particularly among less advantaged families

This section summarises progress against the three main outcomes above. Please note, it is based solely on self-reporting by the funded projects. The GLA did not assess whether each project met these outcomes.

#### Outcome 1: Improved awareness of free early education

In total, **9 out of 11 projects felt that they achieved this outcome**, with the remaining 2 projects reporting that this was partially achieved. Please see some quotes below from the self-evaluation reports:

*“Parent champions reported that, for those engaged, the most important barriers to take up were a lack of awareness of the scheme and an assumption that they were not eligible.”*

*“All attendees at the session had not known that the early year’s education was free, based on post-course feedback from participants at the end of each course.”*

*“Anecdotally, some parents who made telephone enquiries for nursery places and support from the outreach workers reported that they had heard about FEE from a friend who had engaged in the funded project.”*

#### Outcome 2: Improved understanding of the benefits of early education

In total, **9 out of 11 projects felt that they achieved this outcome**, with the remaining 2 projects reporting that this was partially achieved. Please see some quotes below from the self-evaluation reports:

*“Over 50% of parents commented that they understood more about the benefits of early years education in additional feedback.”*



*“The majority of participants did not previously understand the correlation between early years “nursery” and later educational achievement. [This is] based on post-course feedback from participants.”*

### **Outcome 3: Improve take up of free early education**

According to the self-evaluation reports, at least **264 FEE places were taken up** as a result of funded projects. However, as mentioned previously, this was not an expectation of funded projects and it was acknowledged from the outset that this would be difficult to achieve (and measure) given the short timeframe. In fact, only 4 organisations were able to confidently measure this and the figures they presented may have been underestimates. Others measured borough-wide increases in take-up of FEE places but were unable to attribute those changes to their project – these have not been included in the figure above. As such, the real number of FEE places taken up as a result of the Early Years Grant Programme is likely higher than the 264 figure reported above.

For the rest of the organisations, the duration and timeline of their funded projects made this difficult to measure. Even if parents said they planned to take up a FEE place, they may have done so after the project ended. Most organisations did not have a process for confirming uptake, as they were no longer in contact with parents. Even those that did have a process in place found this difficult – for example, one organisation said that there was a poor response from parents to their follow-up emails.

Some, but not all, organisations were able to access Local Authority data on the take up of FEE places during the span of the programme. For example, the London Borough of Ealing saw a 16% increase in take up between January 2019 (the start of the project) and September 2019. However, attributing this increase to their funded project, and tracking which activities or combination of activities resulted in FEE enquiries or take up of places, proved to be a challenge. Overall, it was difficult to quantify uptake without FEE providers collecting this information, for example asking parents how they heard about FEE or what motivated them to apply for a place.

Overall, **7 out of 11 organisations felt that they achieved this outcome**. Most thought that it was highly likely that many engaged families took up FEE, even though they were unable to collect data on this. Many organisations reported that families were interested in applying and would do so. For example, the Limehouse Project were not able to measure the number of families that took up FEE. However, at their workshops they reported that many families were interested in FEE and were seen taking away information from the stalls or signing up to receive more information. Through feedback forms, they also recorded that over 70% of people that attended their workshops said they would consider applying for FEE. At the time of completing their evaluation form, some projects, such as Minik Kardes, reported that families were still contacting them to ask for support around early years applications.

## 4 Key learning

This section summarises the key learning gathered from the grant programme, and explores the successes and challenges involved in delivering the projects and achieving the outcomes as listed above.

### What worked well?

It is not possible to compare the impact of different projects, and therefore the effectiveness of different types of activities and interventions, but the evaluation highlighted some common successes.

Across multiple projects, focused **one-to-one support** with parents was effective as it allowed them to build trust. For some organisations, such as Family Lives, Manor Gardens, and the London Borough of Redbridge, this one-to-one support also involved directly **supporting families to apply for FEE** e.g. sitting with them at the computer and working through the form and helping them to find the right evidence they needed to prove their eligibility. This helped **remove some of the barriers** that parents faced when applying, including language barriers and filling out the application. This one-to-one support would be time-consuming if working with a large number of families, but it is ultimately effective in converting parent interest into applications.

*“Attending the drop in’s and coffee mornings as well as the door knockings allowed the Outreach Plus workers to have 1-1 meetings with the families, to inform them about FEE but also to help them apply on the spot. The greatest impact came from attending weekly the same coffee mornings/drop ins because it created in a trust bond between the families and the Outreach Plus workers.”*

In addition to removing barriers, **addressing concerns and dispelling misconceptions** also appeared to be effective. Many projects heard concerns from families about taking their two-year-old to a nursery, for example that the nurseries are not clean, their child will not be properly looked after, or their child won’t learn their parents’ language. Manor Gardens and the London Borough of Redbridge took parents around children’s centres, where they could talk to staff and observe other children. This allowed them to see what was on offer, and address some of the prior concerns and misconceptions they had. The video produced by London Borough of Haringey also achieved this, by showing clips inside nurseries which meant viewers could see what early learning looks like in reality. It also included clips with parents, so that viewers could **hear about the benefits of FEE directly from parents** as opposed to staff or professionals. In terms of messaging, **focussing on the benefits for children** also appeared to work well, especially when talking about social and cognitive development.

*“‘Learning’ for two-year-olds simply does not resonate with many of our families – particularly those with stay at home mums. Many families cannot visualise early learning. Talking to families about child development, child confidence etc. and providing communities with data about the children of their communities falling behind their peers did however engage many families.”*

*“We have found that small group and 1-to-1 particularly effective in myth busting, particularly with staff/childcare advocates who can speak in community languages.”*

Talking about the benefits of FEE to children (more-so than parents), e.g. the importance of play, and **encouraging parents to share their views** on this appeared to be effective. For example, at each session Wheely Tots asked parents to think of a benefit of attending nursery and share this with other parents. They felt that encouraging parents to share their views led to an improvement in understanding of FEE. This also allowed for honest conversations where parents could share the benefits, but also challenges of sending their child to nursery, and reasons why they might choose not to do so.

Creating content and materials (e.g. leaflets and videos) in **multiple languages** was essential given the specific communities and groups of Londoners that organisations engaged with. This allowed projects to target specific communities, whereby parents with limited English proficiency could understand these materials and approach organisations to ask for additional information.

An alternative to one-to-one engagement was **creating visual content** such as videos promoting FEE. The London Borough of Haringey and London Borough of Ealing created videos in different languages, to raise awareness about FEE, which were **shared on social media** or directly with other organisations. During the first week of release, the London Borough of Haringey reported that 7 families applied for the offer and had cited the video as their source of information. Feedback from parents, Early Years providers, and local authorities was positive, with several other local authorities enquiring about using the video in order to promote FEE in their own boroughs. There were also enquiries about producing videos in additional languages. As mentioned, this video was effective by showing the inside of nurseries and clips of parents talking about FEE. The Limehouse Project additionally put out an advert on Bengali TV which received 70,000 views per week. Viewing figures showed that the advert was effective at engaging the target groups, and the advert led to referrals to Early Years Centres or Family Information Centres. The London Borough of Redbridge instead created a visual and audio 'Talking Photo Album', also in multiple languages, as a **tool for professionals to use** when engaging with parents (e.g. during health checks) or for families to access themselves online.

*"We are pleased that our new [FEE] video, supported by grant funds, [...] is making a huge difference to family's perception of the offer as well as reaching a far wider number of families. Viewers can also see what early learning actually looks like whilst hearing about the benefits in their own language. Feedback regarding the video has been extremely helpful – with several [local authorities] wishing to purchase the video to promote their own two-year-old offer."*

**Joint-working and engaging with organisations** worked well to increase outreach and promote FEE. This included sharing videos, leaflets, posters and other materials (e.g. the London Borough of Redbridge 'Talking Photo Album') with a variety of organisations or professionals (e.g. GPs, Health Visitors, Libraries), as well as signposting or creating referral pathways with Family Information Services or Early Years providers. In some cases, such as the London Borough of Ealing, this involved working with community based local organisations that did not have childcare as their main focus, but which included the topic in their wider support of parents. They reported that messages about childcare provision were best received by families and communities when embedded in broader conversations as part of their general activities, rather than focussing just on FEE. **Engaging directly with Early Years providers** was also effective. For example, Wheely Tots invited them to their sessions, which allowed nursery workers to engage with parents outside of the nursery setting.

*"By delivering the workshops within multiple organisations it raised awareness amongst professionals of support available to their client group."*

*“One childcare advocate said they enjoyed learning about the entitlements and that it is ‘another string in our bow to engage and help families and give the children a great start’.”*

*“The Good Neighbours volunteers felt that the messages about childcare provision were best received when embedded in the conversations as part of their general activities on the estate.”*

*“We felt that the presence of nursery outreach workers at some of our sessions also led to improved understanding of the benefits of nursery.”*

## Key challenges

Although organisations on the whole delivered what they set out to do, and observed positive impacts on families, many faced challenges in delivering their projects. A key challenge reported by most projects was the **duration of the programme**, for several reasons. Foremost, it took time for organisations to form relationships and build trust with vulnerable families which, as mentioned previously, was why one-to-one support with parents was effective. It also took time for some organisations to develop relationships with other stakeholders and community organisations. Some projects additionally required time to develop materials, for example videos. Overall, this meant that some projects ended up having limited time to properly engage families on the topic of FEE. Because of the time to set up, and the duration of both the grant funding and evaluation, there was also little time to then observe and measure the impact of their projects on families and FEE uptake.

*“Nine months is also a short period of time to work with vulnerable families, particularly where there is no existing relationship. It takes a long time to build trust and work holistically with all aspects of family life, of which this project is just one.”*

*“The main part of the grant was to develop a digital tool called the Talking Photo Album, which had taken up significant time to produce...we started to use the tool in the community 5 months into the project, during this time we also had the summer break...For future projects where we are developing tools, we will be looking at the timeframe of the actual delivery of the project.”*

*“Short time period to consult, develop, produce and test promotional materials. Short time period to develop/enhance new partnerships, but good progress has been made.”*

Some organisations faced challenges **identifying and engaging with eligible families**. Firstly, identifying eligible families was sometimes challenging as this required asking about personal circumstances such as employment and income, which some families found off-putting. Secondly, some organisations faced challenges using existing data, for example from the Department of Work and Pensions, to identify eligible families and target their engagement. Some organisations found themselves engaging with families that were not eligible for FEE. Once eligible families were identified, some organisations then faced challenges engaging them and, importantly for those providing one-to-one or small group support, ensuring engagement was sustained. This included challenges in getting in contact with families and encouraging them to take part in their activities, such as visiting nurseries or taking on volunteer roles. However, this was often due to personal or unavoidable circumstances, for example migrant families travelling back to their home country for long periods.

*“Establishing eligibility for free provision – this is a sensitive topic and parents were not always comfortable to disclose their situation to our session leaders or each other.”*

*“The contact detail of parents eligible on the [Department of Work and Pensions] list is out of date, this was demonstrated through home visiting door knocking. This has been very disappointing as it is very time consuming for staff & parent champions as it does not show the true amount of families living in Redbridge who are eligible for the 2yr funding.”*

Additionally, once organisations had engaged with them, some families then faced **challenges taking up FEE**. A key challenge and frustration was the eligibility criteria – Minik Kardes, for example, engaged with many Turkish families who were keen to take up the offer, and met key income criteria, but were ineligible due to their immigration status (no recourse to public funds). Another barrier to engaged families taking up FEE was a lack of available places in nurseries near the home, or a lack of available places in nurseries near their older children’s schools. There were also a range of existing cultural or practical barriers to taking up FEE that projects were either unable to address or which were beyond the scope for projects to address, such as family expectations for mothers to look after children, concerns around children settling in, difficulty fitting FEE hours around work schedules, concerns that their child would not learn their own language etc.

*“We found difficulties to get the eligible parents to accept the funded place due to the cultural and language barriers.”*

*“Other parents have very complex backgrounds and finding a nursery provider is not at the top of their list.”*

*“Where older children were in school was a barrier to take up that we found.”*

The evaluation also attempted to capture what activities were not effective in engaging vulnerable families and increasing uptake of FEE. However, given the limitations of the evaluation and the duration of both the programme and evaluation, most projects were unable to assess which activities worked less well; though one key piece of feedback from a couple of projects was the effectiveness of **engaging male family members**. Some organisations identified the need to engage and influence male family members within communities, to change perceptions about early years and nurseries, though activities targeting men were not as successful as expected. One project also sought to engage male family members as volunteers, though their engagement was lower than expected and their influence and persuasiveness over other families was limited. On reflection, more time is needed to achieve this change. Other organisations tried to recruit parents (not specifically men) as **parent champions/ ambassadors**, but this was also found to be challenging and not as effective as intended. However, they cited that this was due to timescales and resources, and not necessarily that the role of parent champions/ ambassadors was ineffective.

*“On reflection, perhaps the engagement and evidencing structure we put in place was not achievable for our volunteer dads. They were far more comfortable in social situations during gatherings or community activities, where they enjoyed casually discussing the offer. Planning activities and committing to lengthy periods of volunteering proved to be unpopular and saw a drop in volunteers.”*

*“Using volunteers from the community, whilst initially keen and committed, requires constant monitoring and reinforcing of project aims and requirements...Some struggled to provide the required evidencing of contact records of activities which resulted in less numbers being reported to the GLA than were actually reached. Planned community targeting were occasionally missed due to volunteers’ personal circumstances.”*

Another organisation also questioned the impact of their community-wide activities and promotion, for example awareness raising at large public events, though this was because it was difficult to measure and identify the impact of this – it was easier identifying impact from one-to-one engagement.

As mentioned previously, joint-working and engaging with a variety of organisations, especially Early Years providers but also various public services and community organisations, helped to increase outreach and promote FEE within communities. However, funded organisations faced challenges **engaging with organisations**. These challenges were mostly related to resourcing and capacity, which in some cases meant it took longer than expected to engage these organisations or that their involvement and contribution were limited. There were also some instances where organisations appeared unwilling to engage with the projects, though again this may be related to resourcing and capacity issues and not a lack of interest or perceived value of engaging in projects.

*“Meaningfully engaging with many of the community groups we approached [was a challenge], because many are volunteer-led or staffed by part-time workers.”*

*“Key challenges were working with local Early Years Centres and their reluctance to allow us to deliver workshops. This meant that we then had to think quickly and creatively in order to meet milestone targets as it relates to numbers of workshops.”*

*“Nursery staff couldn’t come out to the Playbus due to resource issues.”*

Lastly, like other organisations, **capacity within funded organisations** appeared to be a challenge for some when delivering their projects. This related to some of the challenges already mentioned, for example the extra time and resources required to engage families and other organisations, and to do this within the programme timeline. This is a common challenge among any grant funding programme but is worth highlighting here as many organisations were delivering new and, in some cases, innovative projects. On reflection, a few organisations felt that they needed more resources (and time) to deliver their projects.

*“We thought because we do many aspects of this work, we could do it smoothly, but realistically we needed more staffing to manage the demand of the people turning up.”*

## 5 Conclusions and recommendations

### Conclusions

Overall, the London Early Years Campaign small grants programme achieved its intended outcomes of improving awareness, understanding, and take up of free early education and childcare. The 11 funded projects **engaged with 4,743 families** in London, of which there were 2,396 two-year olds eligible for FEE. The evaluation identified that 264 FEE places were taken up as a result of funded projects. However, this number was difficult to measure and is likely an underestimate of the real number of FEE places taken up.

The limitations of the evaluation made it difficult to assess the effectiveness of different types of activities and interventions, but the evaluation did highlight some common successes among funded organisations as well as challenges. Importantly, the Early Years Grant Programme tested out different projects to engage local families with FEE and captured key learning that can be applied across the sector.

### Recommendations

Based on the key learning captured through the evaluation, the following are key recommendations for organisations and funders seeking to engage local families with FEE.

#### Recommendations for organisations engaging with FEE-eligible families

- Promote to parents the benefits of FEE for their children (e.g. child development and social skills) rather than benefits to themselves (e.g. more free time and ability to take up work).
- Address the concerns and misconceptions parents have around FEE and nurseries. Visiting nurseries, observing what they're like, and talking to nursery staff can help with this.
- Involve parents in the design and delivery of projects, so that targeted families can hear about the experiences and benefits of FEE, and debunked misconceptions, directly from parents that have used it.
- Create visual content to promote FEE. This can include clips of parents talking about FEE or images/videos inside nurseries.
- Provide one-to-one outreach and home visits where possible to help build trust with families, including directly supporting families to check for eligibility, apply for FEE, and search for nurseries and providers.
- Adapt materials and outreach for multiple languages, to maximise outreach and impact.
- Utilise other organisations, services, and events in the community that families are already engaged with.
- Encourage families to share information about FEE within their own social networks, though be cautious about asking too much from parents (e.g. asking them to become parent volunteers)
- Integrate outreach and promotion of FEE among existing related but non-FEE specific activities, e.g. around employment, health, or financial support, as opposed to talking about FEE in isolation.
- Attending community events where parents are likely to attend is a good way to engage with families that may not attend more 'formal' settings or receive information from official sources.
- Consider how to provide support or refer families who want to take up FEE outside of your geographical patch e.g. if they have a preference for a nursery elsewhere. These families should also be followed up and measured, as their FEE take up may still be a direct result of the project.

#### Recommendations for funders

- When designing funding programmes, provide sufficient time for organisations to set up, deliver, and evaluate their projects. This should include considerations for the time required to engage and build trust with families, as well as allowing time to observe the outcomes and any lags there may be.

**Recommendations for the wider sector**

- Encourage Early Years providers to collect data when eligible families apply for FEE places, including how they found out about FEE and what encouraged them to apply. This will be of use to the providers themselves, but also other organisations, to help assess effectiveness of outreach activities.
- Ensure lists and details of eligible families are up-to-date and easily accessible for those organisations that need it. This will allow organisations to target their outreach activities to eligible families.



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