

# Parent champions working with families for better outcomes for children

Julian Grenier



# Introduction to the EEF

- The EEF is an independent social-mobility charity dedicated to breaking the link between family income and children's attainment.
- We do this by supporting early years settings, schools and colleges to improve teaching and learning through the use of research evidence.

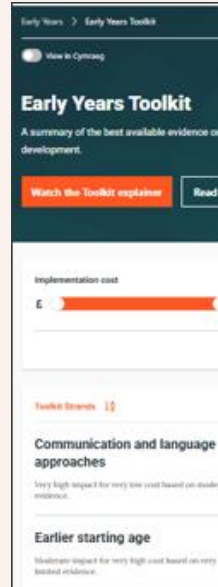


# Introduction to the EEF



Education  
Endowment  
Foundation

- We build evidence
- We summarise evidence
- We put evidence to use.



## Maths Champions

Builds the knowledge of nursery practitioners to support children's early mathematical development.

+3

Additional months progress  
Effectiveness level evidence ?

Maths

Early Years

Whole setting approach

## Nuffield Early Language Intervention

Improving the language skills of children through scripted individual and small group language teaching sessions.

+3

Additional months progress  
Effectiveness level evidence ?

Communication and language

Early Years

Targeted approach

## Reception Jigsaw

Professional development programme for Reception staff to improve children's early mathematical understanding.

+1

Additional months progress  
Efficacy level evidence ?

Maths

Early Years

Whole class approach

**EARLY YEARS  
STRONGER  
PRACTICE HUBS**

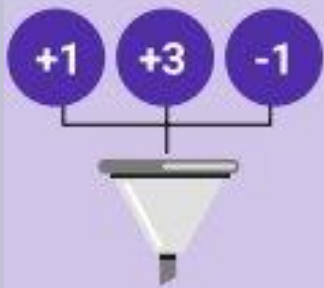




# Types of research evidence



Systematic reviews



Meta-analyses



Experiments  
(e.g. randomised control trials)



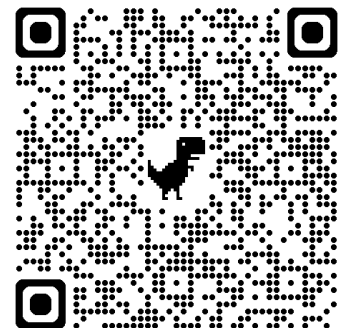
Secondary data analysis



Surveys and interviews



Case studies



A photograph of two young children, a girl and a boy, sitting together and playing with colorful building blocks. The girl, on the left, has dark hair and is wearing a yellow shirt with white polka dots on the sleeves and red and white striped pants. She is looking intently at the blocks. The boy, on the right, is wearing a grey and white camouflage patterned shirt and is also focused on the blocks. They are both reaching out with their hands to place or move the blocks. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a classroom or play area with other children and furniture.

# My experiences: leading Sure Start local programmes and Children's Centres

- Listening
- Designing services together
- Being open to feedback and making changes
- Working on co-operation
- Drawing on research evidence and focusing on impact



# Royal Foundation: Understanding public attitudes to early childhood

## Key findings – 1

### Awareness of importance of early years

- 1. The early years are seen as important, but not uniquely so.** Although the vast majority of the public already buy into the importance of the early years, they are less likely to see the period of 'pregnancy to age 5' as the most important stage of child development. This suggests there is a significant undertaking to demonstrate relative importance and the unique role of the early years compared to other stages of child development.
- 2. There is a strong mandate for greater action.** There is broad consensus that the early years should be more of a priority, even among groups who are less likely to say the early years are the most important, and notwithstanding the broader challenges facing the UK today.

### Knowledge of early years

- 3. Self-reported levels of awareness and knowledge of child development during the early years is mixed.** Though most report having a great deal/fair amount of knowledge of how children develop in their early childhood, 36% report knowing just a little or nothing. Knowledge and awareness is typically lower among men, those in more deprived areas and younger adults or those without children
- 4. Ability to describe the concept of social and emotional development is mixed.** Though most say they are aware and confident of how to help children develop, a significant minority struggle to accurately describe 'social and emotional development'. Social and emotional development is most commonly described as ability to express or manage feelings; or ability to interact, socialise and form relationships with others.



## Capability, barriers and support

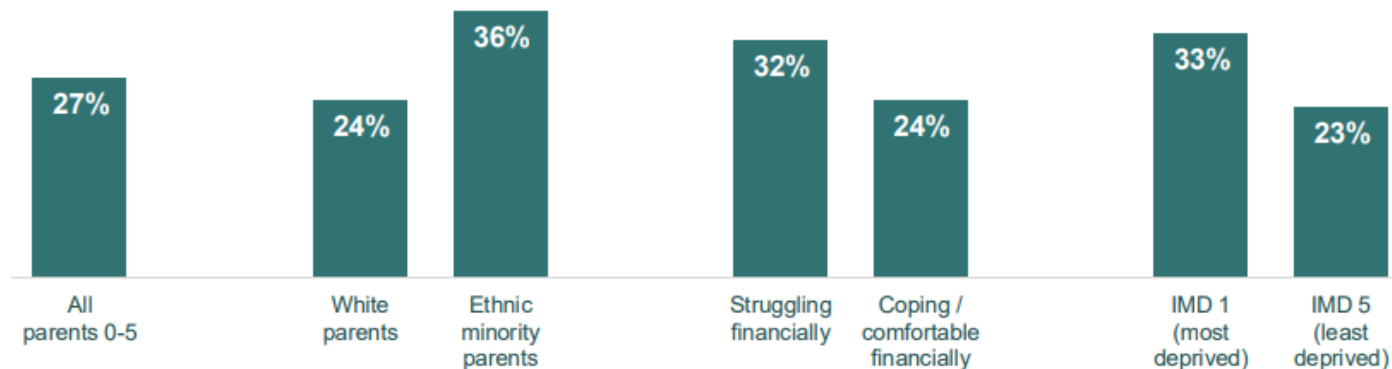
7. **Most people think more needs to be done to support parents with their children's development during the early years.** However, when prompted, few parents are able to name specific current barriers to seeking help and support for their children's development. There may be an opportunity to raise further awareness of access to support.
8. **Though most parents of children aged 0-5 have sought some form of help and support, they are more likely to seek help for physical wellbeing, rather than social and emotional development.** Parents of children aged 0-5 draw on a wide range of formal and informal sources of support for help with social and emotional development – family and friends networks are crucial, as are NHS website, GPs and Health visitors.



## Among parents, the need for more support is felt most acutely by ethnic minority parents and those living in more deprived areas

To what extent do you agree or disagree that there is not enough support for parents, carers and children to help children develop in their early childhood?

% Strongly agree



Base: 1,114 UK parents of children aged 0-5, surveyed in April – May 2022.

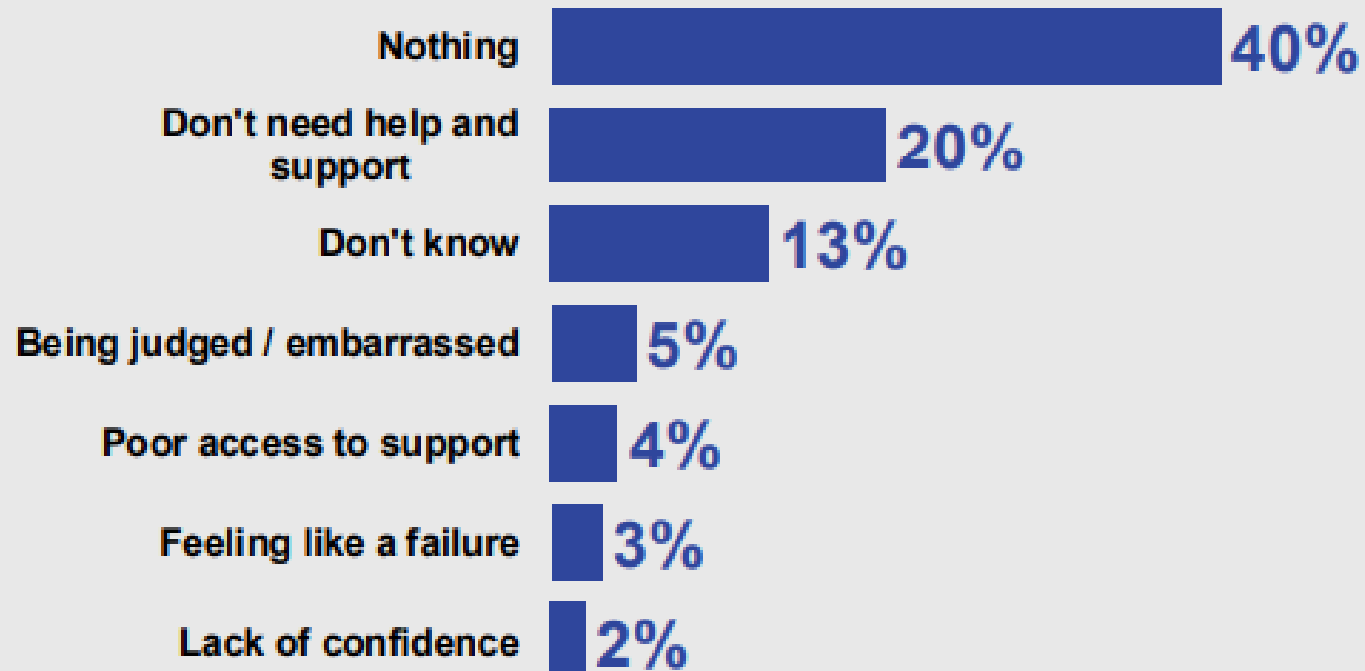
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# Few parents can pinpoint existing barriers to seeking help and support for their children

Q And what, if anything, makes it difficult for you to ask for help or support for your children?



- Although the majority (65%) of parents of 0-5s agreed that more support was needed, few are able to identify current barriers to accessing support.
- Three in five parents (60%) report that there are no barriers to support (40%) or that they do not need any support (20%).
- Where barriers are mentioned, these often relate to parents' own confidence levels.

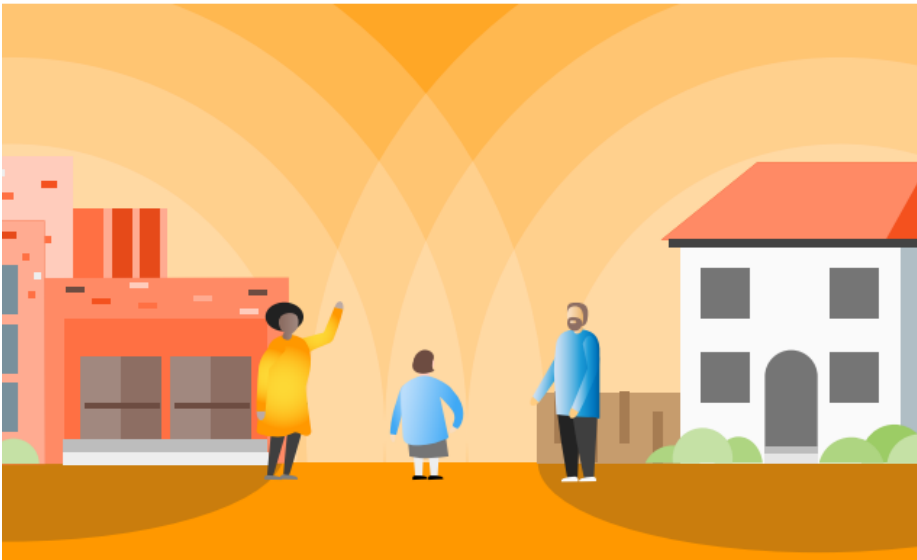
Base: All parents of children aged 0-5 (1,114), surveyed in April – May 2022



# EEF Guidance

## WORKING WITH PARENTS TO SUPPORT CHILDREN'S LEARNING

### Guidance Report



### 1

Critically review how you work with parents

**Schools should be optimistic about the potential of working with parents**

- There is an established link between the home learning environment at all ages and children's performance at school.
- Schools and parents have a shared priority to deliver the best outcomes for their children.

**However, evidence on effective strategies that schools can use to engage parents in their children's learning is mixed**

- If the aim is solely to improve academic outcomes, classroom interventions working directly with children currently have more evidence of effectiveness at improving learning than parenting interventions with the same aim.
- Working effectively with parents can be challenging, and is likely to require sustained effort and support.
- Most schools say that they do not have an explicit plan for how they work with parents, and fewer than 10% of teachers have undertaken CPD on parental engagement.

**Schools should start by critically reviewing their aims and current approaches**

- Focus on areas that have better evidence (such as those summarised opposite)—different approaches are needed for different ages.
- Talk to parents who are less involved about what support they would find helpful.
- Plan and monitor to progress towards defined aims.

### 2

Provide practical strategies to support learning at home

- For young children, promoting shared book reading should be a central component of any parental engagement approach. Home learning activities, such as playing with letters and numbers, are also linked to improved outcomes.
- Tips, support, and resources can make home activities more effective—for example, where they prompt longer and more frequent conversations during book reading.
- Book-gifting alone is unlikely to be effective, but carefully selected books plus advice and support can be beneficial for supporting reading.
- Support parents to create a regular routine and encourage good homework habits, but be cautious about promoting direct parental assistance with homework (particularly for older children).
- Parents can support their children by encouraging them to set goals, plan, and manage their time, effort, and emotions. This type of support can help children to regulate their own learning and will often be more valuable than direct help with homework tasks.
- Consider initiatives to encourage summer reading: these have some promise but are not widely used at present.

### 3

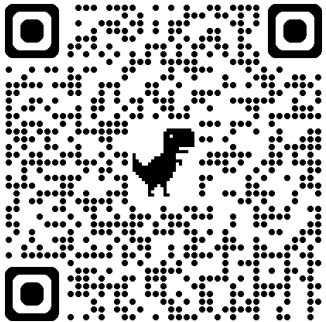
Tailor school communications to encourage positive dialogue about learning

- Well-designed school communications can be effective for improving attainment and a range of other outcomes, such as attendance.
- Examples include weekly texts sent from school to parents, and short, timely letters.
- Impacts from such approaches may appear small but they are generally low cost, and straightforward to introduce.
- Messages are likely to be more effective if they are personalised, linked to learning, and promote positive interactions by, for example, celebrating success.
- Communication should be two-way: consulting with parents about how they can be involved is likely to be valuable and increase the effectiveness of home-school relationships. Currently around half of parents say that they have not been consulted.
- School communications may be particularly important for engaging some parents who could play an important role but may have less contact with school.

### 4

Offer more sustained and intensive support where needed

- Start by assessing needs and talking to parents about what would help them support learning: targeting is likely to be needed to use resources effectively and avoid widening gaps.
- Communicate carefully to avoid stigmatising, blaming, or discouraging parents. Focus on building parents' efficacy—that they are equal partners and can make a difference.
- Encourage a consistent approach to behaviour between parents and the school, for example, by sharing expectations with parents.
- Offering more structured, evidence-based programmes can help to develop positive behaviour and consistency where needs are greater.
- Plan carefully for group-based parenting initiatives (such as regular workshops). A convenient time and location, face-to-face recruitment, trusting relationships, and an informal, welcoming environment are the most important factors for parents to attend group sessions.
- Consider offering regular home visits for younger children with greater needs. This can be an effective approach for parents that struggle to attend meetings, and for building relationships.



## Critically review how you work with parents



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Thank you –  
any  
questions?