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Home learning environment support to improve early literacy skills of 3- to 5-year-old children: A trial of the REAL programme

Submission date
07/10/2019

Recruitment status
No longer recruiting

Registration date
14/11/2019

Overall study status
Completed

Last Edited
12/01/2024

Condition category
Other

[_] Prospectively registered
[X] Protocol
[_] Statistical analysis plan
[X] Results
[_] Individual participant data

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims
The study evaluates the effectiveness of the Raising Early Achievement in Literacy (REAL) programme. It is an intervention that seeks to support children's early literacy and language by working with parents and practitioners to improve children's home learning environment. REAL is a programme originally developed and delivered by the University of Sheffield. The programme trains practitioners (such as nursery staff) to support children and families, conduct home visits and provide events to improve children's home learning environment and literacy

What does the study involve?
Children will be randomly allocated to one of two groups. In the intervention group, families will receive visits of Early Year practitioners who will advise them on developing a home learning environment. Children in the control group, will continue using current best practice.

All children will take a literacy test at the start and end of the school year. We will compare levels of literacy attainment for the treatment and control group

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
REAL is designed to improve literacy attainment for early years children. There are no potential risks

Where is the study run from?
National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) (UK)

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
The study started in March 2019 and will finish in October 2021

Who is funding the study?
The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) (UK)

Who is the main contact?
Svetlana Speight
Svetlana.Speight@natcen.ac.uk

More information can be found at:
https://natcen.ac.uk/publications/evaluation-real-programme

Contact information

Type(s)
Principal investigator

Contact name
Dr Svetlana Speight

Contact details
35 Northampton Square
London
United Kingdom
EC1V 0AX
+44 (0)207 5498546
Svetlana.Speight@natcen.ac.uk

Additional identifiers

Protocol serial number
P13582

Study information

Scientific Title
Home learning environment support to improve early literacy skills of 3- to 5-year-old children: A randomised controlled efficacy trial of the REAL programme

Acronym
REAL

Study objectives
1. The REAL programme would improve children's home learning environment
2. The REAL programme would raise children's early literacy skills
3. The REAL programme would improve children's emergent writing skills

Ethics approval required
Old ethics approval format

Ethics approval(s)
Approval pending, NatCen Ethics Review Committee (35 Northampton Square, London EC1V 0AX; +44 (0)207 250 1866; info@natcen.ac.uk), ref: n/a

Primary study design
Interventional

Study design
Two-arm multi-site child-level randomised controlled efficacy trial

Study type(s)
Treatment

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Early-years education

Interventions
This is a two-arm multi-site child-level randomised controlled efficacy trial of REAL on the early literacy development of children aged 3 to 5 years old. Nurseries agreeing to participate in the trial will identify 8 to 16 children eligible to receive the intervention. Within each participating nursery, families of eligible children that agree to participate in the trial will be allocated to one of the two groups using blocked randomisation by nursery. The allocation ratio between treatment and control within each nursery will be a 1:1 ratio. Analysts will be blinded to the identity of nurseries and families at the time of randomisation. Early Years assessors will be blinded to treatment allocation when administering the assessment.

The intervention is the Raising Early Achievement in Literacy (REAL) programme, which has been designed by the National Children's Bureau (NCB). The programme aims to help practitioners (usually nursery teacher or reception teachers) to build parents' knowledge and confidence in creating a home learning environment that supports and encourages their children's early literacy and development.

At each nursery setting, practitioners will identify 8-16 children who they think will benefit from the intervention. Of these, around eight children and their parents/carers at each setting will be selected at random to receive the intervention. The families of children in the control group will receive a business as usual approach to teaching literacy. The intervention group will receive at least eight home visits from a trained practitioners. Practitioners have the option to conduct an additional two visits up to a maximum of 10 home visits. Each visit lasts up to one hour.

The REAL Programme will be delivered over four school terms, starting when the children are in the Spring term of the nursery year and concluding when they are in the Spring term of Reception year at primary school. The practitioner will continue to conduct home visits with families during the Reception year as part of the intervention, unless the child moves to another school outside of the local area.

Intervention Type
Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)
Early literacy development as measured by the Preschool Early Literacy Indicators (PELI) assessment. To be collected at baseline (Sept-Oct 2019) and endline (Feb-March 2021)

Key secondary outcome(s)
1. Emergent writing skills measured by the Sheffield Early Literacy Development Profile (SELDP)
2. Children's home learning environment measured by a 12-item instrument proposed by Niklas

et al (2014)
Both to be collected at baseline (Sept-Oct 2019), and endline (Feb-March 2021)

Completion date
30/10/2021

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
The following eligibility criteria apply to nurseries:
1. Type of nursery: Only school-based nurseries will be eligible to take part.
2. Prior REAL involvement: nurseries and practitioners should not have any prior exposure to The REAL programme.
3. Availability: the school's Early Years coordinator, in conjunction with the school headteacher, will identify one practitioner to undertake training and be able to commit a half day per week to focus on programme delivery (should the nursery be assigned to receive the intervention). All nurseries also need to have identified a key point of contact to support evaluation activities.

The following eligibility criteria apply to children:
1. Aged 3-4 in August 2019.
2. Children needing additional support in early literacy based on practitioners' prior knowledge of the child and of the child's parent(s)/carers.

Practitioners will be asked to keep a record of the criteria they use to identify eligible children. After this information is collected, nurseries' response patterns will be analysed.

Participant type(s)
Other

Healthy volunteers allowed
No

Age group
Child

Lower age limit
3 Years

Upper age limit
4 Years

Sex
All

Key exclusion criteria
Does not meet inclusion criteria

Date of first enrolment
01/03/2019

Date of final enrolment
31/08/2019

Locations

Countries of recruitment
United Kingdom

England

Study participating centre
NatCen Social Research
35 Northampton Square
London
United Kingdom
EC1V 0AX

Sponsor information

Organisation
Education Endowment Foundation

ROR
https://ror.org/03bhd6288

Funder(s)

Funder type
Charity

Funder Name
Education Endowment Foundation

Alternative Name(s)
EducEndowFoundn, The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), Education Endowment Foundation | London, EEF

Funding Body Type
Private sector organisation

Funding Body Subtype
Trusts, charities, foundations (both public and private)

Location
United Kingdom

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan
The datasets analysed in this study will be stored in a non-publicly available repository; the Fischer Family Trust (FFT) archive (https://fft.org.uk/). The dataset will be at individual level (i.e. one row per pupil), including information on the treatment they receive and the outcomes of testing (at baseline and follow-up). Data will be obtained and held under the legal basis of legitimate interests with individuals able to express objections to data processing until the data is archived. The data will be archived for an indefinite period for archiving, historical or scientific research purposes, with access criteria determined by the Fischer Family Trust and the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF). Data will be available in a pseudo-anonymised format so that future analysis incorporating data from the National Pupil Database (NPD) could be facilitated

IPD sharing plan summary
Stored in repository

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Funder report results		31/07/2022	12/01/2024	No	No
Protocol file	version 3	24/05/2021	12/01/2024	No	No
Study website	Study website	11/11/2025	11/11/2025	No	Yes