

Evaluation of the Early Childhood Programme in Jersey

Executive summary

NCB have worked in partnership with Jersey Child Care Trust and supported by the UBS Optimus Foundation UK on an ambitious three year project (2016 – 2019), to facilitate capacity building in the early years sector and improve outcomes for young children and their families.

Historically, too many children in Jersey were not reaching their full potential and Jersey's early years services did not have the opportunity for sharing best practice and improvement.

The Centre for Research in Early Childhood (CREC) have provided an external evaluation report on the first three years of the programme. The evidence in the report demonstrates that the ECD Programme has had *"a proven and significant impact at Government level and also across the early years sector in Jersey"*. All KPIs have been met with a number of them exceeded.

- **OBA** has been particularly successful in relation to significantly improving planning and collaborative working on the island at a strategic level. This is evident in a stakeholder statement:-

"OBA has been a real success. The focus has shifted and the States/Government has a real commitment to putting children first, driven initially by the Enquiry raising protection issues. The Island community have taken notice and there has been a change in visibility. Now ALL children are visible."

- **The Making it REAL** (Raising Early Achievement in Literacy) and **Knowledge Makes Change** (KMC) strands of the programme have successfully increased both practitioner and parental knowledge and engagement in developing strategies to support young children's development.
 - 1660 Parents have engaged with the programme, the evaluation report states *"the Making it REAL programme has had a considerable impact on parents' knowledge and confidence in their support for children's learning and literacy"*. 84% (literacy prog) and 79% (Maths prog) parents reported increased confidence. Parent 1 commented *"We can see the difference in (child's) language, stories, patience, self-*

organisation, concentration, there is more interaction from (child), he is more confident and less judgemental"

- Evidence shows that the REAL programme has reached 2000 children and increased outcomes relating to language, literacy and maths and overall school readiness.
- **REAL Literacy Training:** A series of funded 2-day training programmes has been delivered to 92 early years practitioners.
 - *"Over 90% of practitioners rated the training excellent or very good in terms of increasing knowledge of engaging with parents to support learning; supporting children with early literacy and early identification of need and onward referral. 83% of practitioners rated the training excellent" (evaluation report)*
- **Knowledge Makes Change Seminars:** A series of seminars on a variety of topics, including supporting bilingual families; supporting children with SEN; supporting emotional well-being and Sustained Shared Thinking (SST); and supporting maths in the early years, have been delivered, all brought high profile key note speakers to Jersey. Each seminar gained an average attendance of 74 Early Years Practitioners in addition to key strategic partners.
 - *One evaluation interviewee quoted: "The NCB clout, quality of contacts and speakers at events have benefitted all and brought them together. The Private sector has a feeling of greater recognition of the part they play, that CPD is important to them and of their growing sense of professionalism"*
- Knowledge Makes Change Bulletins are published monthly to provide a balance of Jersey/international context. The evaluation evidence shows that *"KMC bulletins have gained 2294 views since January 2019 revealing a continued high and growing level of engagement"* and states that *"the KMC seminars have a high profile and perceived value at all levels in the Jersey System"*.

The Impact

The evaluation report documents *"strong evidence that the Making it REAL and KMC work plans have enhanced early Years and health practitioners' knowledge and understand of how to support young children's development and learning"*. This is clearly evidenced from the following statistics:

- Total of 282 practitioners trained;
- 133 practitioners from 48 settings trained in Making it REAL Literacy;
- 81 Highlands College students;
- 15 Making it REAL Champions;
- 11 parent volunteers;
- 41 practitioners trained in Making it REAL Maths;
- 65 Jersey settings engaged;
- 75% (50) 'significantly engaged' 1,956 parents / carers engaged across 3 years;
- 2,363 children from across the island participated in Making it REAL;
- 1,956 engaged parents and family members.
- 331 'monitored children' participated in home visits across 3 years;
- 380+ children joined events in Year 3;
- 2,363 children total directly benefit across 3 years (home visit, events, and siblings supported)
- 50 of settings are actively engaged in the programme;
- 35 of settings have delivered one / more than one complete cycle; of REAL (Literacy or Maths);
- 12 settings have completed more than one cycle of either Literacy or Maths projects and / or contributed practice examples and / or host Making it REAL Champions.

An evaluation interviewee stated:

"Making it REAL is now universal in Nursery classes and schools but in the Private and Voluntary Sector it is accessible across the settings but it's much more variable in understanding and practice. From a child's perspective there is more consistency and continuity of experience between sectors and settings. The 'us' and 'them' element between sectors is disappearing as the contribution and professionalism of all is recognised".

Outcomes for children: the positive impact of the programme is evident when comparing the number and percentage of children demonstrating measurable improvements in a number of key indicators of school readiness between the start and end of participation in the programme. The evaluation report indicates that *"all*

participating children have developed improved literacy, language and communication skills".

	2016	2017
Oral language:	76% (31 of 41)	93% (14 of 15)
Awareness of environmental print	72% (51 of 71)	80% (28 of 35)
Sharing books	67% (26 of 39)	95% (18 of 19)
Engagement in early writing	61% (33 of 54)	87% (27 of 31)

- 85% of children improved oral language skills, 84% shared books at home more, and there was an increase in 72% regularly practicing writing skills.

Library Membership: Following participation in the literacy programme the number of children having library membership has gained a significant increase.

- 2016 increased from 42% (34 of 81) to 68% (55 of 81)
- 2017 increased from 44% (15 of 34) to 79% (30 of 38)

The overall impact of the programme is best described in the words of parents who participated in group discussions as part of the evaluation process

- *Parent 1: "We can see the difference in (child's) language, stories, patience, self-organisation, concentration, there is more interaction from (child), he is more confident and less judgemental".*
- *Parent 2: "It's sometimes hard to see the specific value for child but I can see a change in her attitude to learning – she is more positive and it is fun orientated".*
- *Parent 5: "(Child) has got absolutely no fear of school. He comes here joyfully which will ease the transition when he begins school next year. He loves to choose these activities and now has learnt to engage easily with other children".*

Recommendations

In its final year of operation the ECD Programme has highlighted a set of continuing challenges in securing its legacy on the Island and fully achieving its aims and the outcomes it desires. Analysis of the evaluation evidence and reflection on the current Jersey context and policy drivers, and on the ECD Programme achievements, suggests some clear priorities for further action.

- 1. Continuation of the work to embed the ECD Programme strands of work and achievements more sustainably into Jersey policy priorities and vision.**
- 2. Securing ECD Programme sustainability by seeking additional funding and offering system leadership training and support to OBA and REAL Champions.**
- 3. Greater engagement of target groups.**
- 4. Further embedding of the OBA approach, particularly at front-line service delivery level.**
- 5. Widening and strengthening impact data for the Making it Real Programme, (to include Communication and Language Development, and Mathematical Development) using more rigorous assessment instruments.**
- 6. Encouraging action projects linked to KMC seminars to secure impact on practice.**

NCB Response to the Evaluation

NCB are pleased to confirm and accept the findings of the Centre for Research in Early Childhood during their Part 2 Evaluation of the Jersey Early Childhood Development Programme.

Continuing from the success of the initial Part 1 Evaluation, which CREC successfully tendered for, we believe that CREC have responded cogently to the evaluation brief, responded to the unique requirements of the programme's approach and provided the academic rigour and scrutiny that has garnered their team the international renown that they deserve.

The research process, involving focus groups with Jersey parents and early years practitioners as well as interviews with members of the programme Steering Group, was conducted in an investigative yet participatory approach, paralleling NCB's own

values in the way we work. This combined with the thorough analysis of existing project data and outputs against the programme's aims has given us an in depth assessment of our work across the whole programme.

The final evaluation report, in conjunction with the interim results provided in Part 1, have given NCB an invaluable perspective to assess the impact of a diverse and far reaching programme. We will use these results to inform our plans for further work in Jersey in collaboration with UBS Optimus and our local partners to build on the ambitious aims of the programme whilst also ensuring that each programme strand is embedded and sustained.

Annamarie Hassall MBE

Director, Practice & Programmes
National Children's Bureau