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# Effectiveness Trial of Nuffield Early Language Intervention Preschool (NELI Preschool) 2024-2025

## Project Information Sheet

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For the attention of all nurseries – both state-maintained and PVI settings

### **About the programme**

NELI Preschool is a 20-week oral language programme, centred around shared storybook reading, which is designed to improve the oral language skills of children in nursery settings. Each week focuses on a different book – a mixture of traditional tales, contemporary stories, and non-fiction – and is comprised of activities to encourage the development of a rich vocabulary and ability to listen to, tell and enjoy stories.

The NELI Preschool intervention includes two core components: universal language enrichment for all children in nursery (Whole Group Sessions) and targeted intervention for those with the weakest oral language skills (Small Group and Individual Sessions). Whole Group Sessions are delivered daily by nursery staff, usually the room leader or class teacher, who is trained and supported to use the programme. In addition to this, six children with the weakest oral language skills in each class will receive additional Small Group and Individual Sessions, delivered by nursery practitioners or teaching assistants who have also been trained and are supported to use the programme. The programme training and support is delivered by OxEd and Assessment (OxEd). Settings will also be supported by the OxEd team to determine the most suitable set-up for the whole-class and targeted components according to the setting structure.

The programme will provide settings with access to a child-friendly language screening tool (LanguageScreen), which runs on a digital tablet. This is used to assess children's oral language skills and to identify the children with the lowest language scores for targeted intervention. LanguageScreen is not in conflict with other assessments such as Wellcomm, and, in fact, provides additional information for any referral process.

The programme consists of:

- Whole Class Sessions (15 minutes every day): Each week the children first listen to the whole story of the week and are engaged in the text through interactive questioning and discussion. Following sessions introduce new special words and include activities to deepen understanding and encourage use of the new vocabulary.
- Small Group Sessions (3 x 15-minute sessions per week for children selected for targeted intervention): These sessions focus on strengthening the children's abilities to use the taught vocabulary, extending this learning into other contexts.
- One-to-One Sessions (1 x 5-minute session per week for each of the children selected to receive targeted intervention): Individual sessions focus on the development of each child's understanding, using prompts to encourage the child to retell the story.

In addition to sessions and materials, nurseries also receive comprehensive CPDUK-accredited online practitioner training, the easy-to-use highly reliable language screening tool and continuous support throughout delivery of the programme from the experienced speech and language specialists in the OxEd team.

In 2021-22, 65 nursery settings took part in an [evaluation](#) of NELI Preschool that showed positive results. Children who received NELI Preschool made three months' additional progress in overall language skills compared to those that did not receive the programme. The aim of the current evaluation is to build on previous findings to assess whether these positive results persist when the programme is delivered at a larger scale.

## **About the current evaluation**

As part of the Department for Education's Early Years Recovery Programme, the East of England Early Years Stronger Practice Hub, the Early Years South West Stronger Practice Hub, the Northern Lights Early Years Stronger Practice Hub, the Yorkshire and Humber Together Early Years Stronger Practice Hub, the Kent Early Years Stronger Practice Hub, the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Early Years Stronger Practice Hub, the Thames Valley Early Years Stronger Practice Hub, the London South Early Years Stronger Practice Hub, The Great North Early Years Stronger Practice Hub and the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) are working together to fund nurseries' access to evidence-informed programmes and study the programme's influence on practice and children's outcomes. This initiative aims to support education recovery following the pandemic, whilst also developing our understanding of effective professional development in the early years. The NELI Preschool programme will be delivered by OxEd and will be independently evaluated by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER).

The aim of the evaluation is to ascertain the impact of NELI Preschool on the language skills of 3 to 4-year-old children. The evaluation will assess expressive vocabulary, receptive vocabulary, sentence repetition and listening comprehension via LanguageScreen, and information content and grammar via Renfrew Action Picture Test (RAPT). It will run as a **randomised controlled trial (RCT)** in the academic year 2024-25. We will randomly allocate 318 eligible nursery settings to one of the two groups:

- 1) The intervention group, who will deliver NELI Preschool programme; or
- 2) The control group, who will continue with their usual practice.

Participating children in all settings will be assessed with LanguageScreen in Autumn 2024 by nursery staff (prior to randomisation). All participating children, from both control and intervention settings, will then be assessed with LanguageScreen and RAPT in Summer 2025 by NFER Test Administrators (after the programme delivery is complete).

## **What is the benefit of my setting participating in this trial?**

Your setting will contribute to the evidence relating to the impact of NELI Preschool on language skills for 3 to 4-year-old children. Your setting's participation will also help to understand how best to implement the programme in the future and at a larger scale.

Participating settings will also receive,

Intervention group:

- The NELI Preschool programme
- £400 in recognition of their contribution to this research
- Paid staff time to complete training and administer LanguageScreen
- Assessment feedback reports at the end of the evaluation

Control group:

- £250 in recognition of their contribution to this research
- An additional £1000 (which can either be financial payment or be used to purchase the NELI Preschool programme so that settings can deliver it after the trial)
- Paid staff time to administer LanguageScreen
- Assessment feedback reports at the end of the evaluation

## **Who can take part in this trial?**

- Settings can be **state-maintained or PVI nurseries**.
- Settings will need to have a **minimum of fourteen 3 to 4-year-old children attending 15+ hours per week** in the 2023-24 academic year.
- Settings must be willing to allocate time for a *minimum* of two nursery staff members to complete

online training and administer LanguageScreen, encouraging as many practitioners who work with 3 to 4-year-olds as possible to complete the online training as well. Payment for training time will be made for up to 5 trainees per setting (£120 per trainee).

- Settings must be located in the following LA's: Bexley, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, Bracknell Forest, Brighton and Hove, Bromley, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Cornwall, Croydon, Darlington, Derby, Derbyshire, Devon, Dorset, Durham, Ealing, East Riding of Yorkshire, East Sussex, Gateshead, Greenwich, Hammersmith and Fulham, Hampshire, Hartlepool, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Isle of Wight, Kent, Kingston upon Hull, Kingston upon Thames, Lambeth, Lewisham, Medway, Merton, Middlesbrough, Milton Keynes, Newcastle upon Tyne, Norfolk, North East Lincolnshire, North Lincolnshire, North Tyneside, North Yorkshire, Northumberland, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Plymouth, Portsmouth, Reading, Redcar and Cleveland, Richmond upon Thames, Slough, South Tyneside, Southampton, Southwark, Stockton-on-Tees, Suffolk, Sunderland, Surrey, Sutton, Torbay, West Berkshire, West Sussex, Wandsworth, Windsor and Maidenhead, Wokingham, and York.
- Settings are not eligible if they are participating in another SPH funded programme delivered in the 2024-2025 academic year including allocation to the control group for one of the other SPH trials (Early Talk Boost, One Programme, EYCP, Concept Cat, Communication Friendly Settings).
- Settings cannot take part if participating in another EEF funded evaluation in the early years or if they are participating in the [DfE Early Years Professional Development Programme](#) during the year of evaluation delivery (2024/25).
- Settings that took part in the previous evaluation of NELI Preschool (known as the NELI – Nursery or NELI-N efficacy trial) by the University of Oxford are not eligible to take part in this evaluation.
- All 3 to 4-year-old children (as on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2024) who are in the pre-school classroom are eligible to take part in the evaluation. Children who 'move up' or join the pre-school classroom after settings have completed LanguageScreen are not eligible for the evaluation; however, in settings allocated to the intervention group, these children can still take part in the Whole Group Sessions.

### **What does the training look like?**

All staff members involved in the delivery of NELI Preschool sessions will be given access to the online training supported by OxEd. This Continued Professional Development (CPD) is accredited by CPDUK with a certificate of completion at the end of the training course. The training course for NELI Preschool consists of:

- A 10-12 hour online, asynchronous training course with no live elements that can be completed at the convenience of practitioners' schedules.
- The first part of the training covers the development of oral language skills, the importance of oral language, developmental milestones and key teaching strategies to support language development. The second part focuses on how to deliver the programme effectively, including videos of sessions with commentary to support practitioner learning and confidence.
- Discussion forums where the research and specialist team mentors can answer questions, and trainees can interact with mentors and with each other to take an active role in peer-to-peer support.
- A 'Delivery Support Hub' for practitioners to share ideas, receive weekly tips and updates and continue engaging with the research and specialist team to answer any queries or issues that arise throughout delivery.

Payment for training time is £120 per trainee, up to a maximum of 5 trainees. This payment will be made by OxEd directly to the intervention settings on completion of the online training for nominated staff.

### **When will the training take place?**

Training is online and asynchronous; practitioners can access training from mid-November 2024. Training must be completed by the end of December to ensure that delivery of the programme can begin in

January 2025. Practitioners will retain access to the training throughout programme delivery.

### **What does the evaluation involve?**

- Once your setting has signed up to take part in the evaluation, you will be asked to share data for the 3–4-year-old children enrolled in the 2024-2025 academic year, complete online surveys and administer LanguageScreen assessments with all 3-4 year-olds (approximately 10 minutes per child) as part of the baseline activities.
- After the baseline activities are complete your setting will be randomly allocated to either the intervention or control group.
  - Nominated staff from the intervention settings will complete the online training, deliver the NELI Preschool programme to all 3-4-year-old children in the pre-school classroom between January and June 2025, and complete weekly attendance registers for NELI Preschool sessions delivered. A small number of intervention settings will be invited to act as (anonymous) case studies for the evaluation. Participation in this element is voluntary.
  - Control settings will continue with their usual practice during this time.
- After the intervention period all settings will complete online surveys and facilitate administration of LanguageScreen and RAPT assessments by the NFER Test Administrators.
- NELI Preschool leads from intervention settings will be invited to complete a follow-up online survey one year after the trial ends.

Please see the timeline below for a detailed breakdown of activities.

### **How should my setting sign up for this trial?**

Expressions of interest are currently being collected, please complete the short form [here](#). Once submitted, the OxEd team will be in touch. If your setting is eligible, OxEd will send the Memorandum of Understanding for your setting's Headteacher or the Nursery Manager to sign.

### **Who should I contact for more information?**

Find out more about NELI Preschool and see what other settings say about the programme here: <https://oxedandassessment.com/uk/nelipreschool/>.

For further information about the NELI Preschool programme, please contact Mariela Rios Diaz, Research Officer and NELI Preschool Project Manager at OxEd: [nelipreschool@oxedandassessment.com](mailto:nelipreschool@oxedandassessment.com)

For further information about the evaluation please contact NFER at [NELIPreschool@nfer.ac.uk](mailto:NELIPreschool@nfer.ac.uk)

### **Who controls what data is shared?**

NFER is the data controller for this evaluation and will make decisions about how and what personal data is used in accordance with the objectives of the evaluation set by the EEF. OxEd is the data processor during the evaluation. After the evaluation report is published on the EEF website, NFER will share evaluation data with OxEd, at which point OxEd will become an independent data controller. At the end of the evaluation, the evaluation data will be transferred to the EEF data archive, at which point the EEF will become the data controller.

### **Privacy Information**

OxEd & Assessment's Privacy Notice can be found [here](#).

You can see further details of the evaluation and links to NFER's privacy notices for the evaluation [here](#).

For more information on how the EEF processes and uses data stored in the EEF data archive, please

see the [privacy notice](#) for the EEF data archive.

### Timeline for key activities 2023-2025

Time	Event
November 2023 – June 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interested settings complete EOI (Expression of Interest)</li> <li>OxEd follows up with EOIs and determines any equipment that settings need to take part in the trial</li> <li>Eligible settings sign up to the trial (Headteacher or Nursery Manager sign a Memorandum of Understanding)</li> <li>Settings nominate a key project contact (NELI Preschool lead)</li> </ul>
July 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NFER contacts settings who have signed up to the trial, providing details of evaluation activities that will take place from September 2024 onwards</li> <li>NFER provides settings with parent information letters</li> </ul>
September 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Settings circulate parent information letters to parents with a 2-week period for responses.</li> <li>Settings share information about all 3-4-year-old children enrolled in the pre-school classroom with NFER including name, date of birth, class, gender, EAL, EYPP status, LA of home and setting attendance details.</li> <li>Settings complete two online staff surveys (NELI Preschool lead survey and nominated practitioner survey)</li> </ul>
October 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NFER shares guidance on how to complete baseline LanguageScreen assessment</li> <li>Settings complete baseline LanguageScreen assessment with all 3-4-year-old children in the preschool classroom</li> </ul>
November – December 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Settings are notified of which group they have been randomly allocated to (intervention or control)</li> <li>Intervention settings receive access to LanguageScreen results along with Targeted Intervention allocation recommendations.</li> <li>NELI Preschool training (online and asynchronous)</li> </ul>
January 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Settings receive payment to cover staff time for completing baseline LanguageScreen assessments</li> <li>Intervention settings receive payment to cover staff time to complete NELI Preschool online training</li> </ul>
January – June 2025	<p>All intervention settings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>deliver the NELI Preschool programme (supported by OxEd), and</li> <li>complete weekly attendance registers for NELI Preschool sessions</li> <li>A small number of intervention settings will be invited to take part in (anonymous) NFER case study visits</li> </ul>
June – July 2025	<p>Intervention and control settings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>complete two online staff surveys (NELI Preschool lead survey and nominated practitioner survey), and</li> <li>facilitate visit/s from a NFER test administrator to administer LanguageScreen and RAPT with selected children</li> </ul>
September 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All settings receive assessment feedback reports</li> <li>All settings receive payment for completing relevant trial activities, and OxEd liaises with control settings on final payment, or ordering NELI Preschool for the setting to deliver in the next academic year</li> </ul>
May – July 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NELI Preschool lead in intervention settings invited to participate in follow-up survey.</li> </ul>