

Research
Centre



Early Years Peer to Peer Support Programme

Evaluation of effectiveness and impact

Clarissa White with Jen Gibb

National Children's Bureau: working with children, for children

Registered Charity Number 258825.

8 Wakley Street, London EC1V 7QE. Tel: 020 7843 6000

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About the Research Centre

The Research Centre undertakes high quality and rigorous research to inform policy and practice across the children's sector. As an independent Centre within NCB, we work in collaboration with other research institutions and policy and practice experts.

You can find further information about our work, including current and completed projects, the guidelines we adhere to, our newsletter and recent publications including research summaries at www.ncb.org.uk/research.

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Summary

The Early Years Peer to Peer Support (PTP) Programme, funded by the Department for Education (DfE), was launched in April 2011 to provide a package of tailored support to address issues of quality in the early years (EY) sector. It was set up for two years by the Early Childhood Unit (ECU) at NCB in partnership with the Centre for Excellence and Outcomes (C4EO) and was designed to improve outcomes for young children and their families. The package of support was delivered by a team of early years (EY) sector specialists (SSs) to local authorities (LAs) and on a few occasions other EY organisations such as social enterprises or private nursery chains. Since the programme was launched 80 assignments have been allocated to LAs and organisations across the country.

The NCB Research Centre was commissioned by the ECU to carry out an independent evaluation of the PTP Support Programme assignments. This report presents the findings from two components of the evaluation comprising an online end of assignment survey and five case studies to explore how LAs used the PTP support and any impacts it was perceived to have.

Evaluation design

A month after completing a PTP Support Programme recipients were invited to take part in a short online survey which explored their experience of the assignment and reflections on its value, role and impact. Of the 64 recipients of PTP Support, 37 had completed the assignment when the on line survey was carried out and 15 of these recipients responded – resulting in a response rate of 41%. All but one of these respondents was a LA.

The survey results were supplemented with quantitative data collated by C4EO from end of assignment feedback forms received from participating LAs or other EY providers. At the time of writing this report feedback forms were completed by 27 LAs or other EY organisations (out of a potential 44 completed assignments) – a response rate of 61%.

In order to amplify the survey findings five case studies were carried out to explore the experience of delivering and participating in a PTP assignment and perceptions about any resulting impacts. The case studies were selected to ensure a range of different assignments. Each case study included up to three interviews - with the person in each LA who led the assignment, the Sector Specialist who delivered the PTP support and one of the beneficiaries who took part in the assignment. A total of 14 interviews were carried out over the telephone using a topic guide during February and early March 2013.

Case study Summaries

Through the use of five case studies the report illustrates how a range of LAs used the PTP support and any impacts it was perceived to have:

Case Study A – Developing an Early Years Strategy

The assignment for Case Study A involved developing an EY strategy for a LA. It involved the EY team and key stakeholders who were working across all the key services in the main districts of the LA. The assignment took just under 12 months to complete – starting in autumn 2011 and finishing in September 2012. The assignment consisted of a series of workshops – which initially focused on helping the EY Team consider how to work more effectively to improve outcomes for children and prepared the way for a much larger strategy development workshop with 60 professionals working across the LA. At the end of the workshop they came up with a vision, principles and priorities and an overarching delivery plan to deliver an EY strategy in the LA both at the county and district level. The assignment ended with a review workshop where participants reflected and reviewed the outputs from the previous workshop and explored and mapped progress towards their goals.

The PTP assignment was very positively appraised by all involved and enabled the LA to set up an effective EY strategy, involving a wide range of partners from across children’s services, health services, maintained schools, and PVI settings who are all working in partnership. This strategy was perceived to have resulted in a much stronger and more secure EY sector.

Case Study B – Multi Agency Working

Case study B involved strengthening multi agency working between the EY team, health, children’s centres, early years settings and schools. Within the LA the assignment was led by the EY Adviser who worked in partnership with the Senior Public Health Strategist. The assignment was carried out between October 2011 and the end of March 2012. The assignment was delivered by two SSs and consisted of an Outcomes Based Accountability¹ and Turning the Curve (TTC)² Workshop involving key stakeholders across the LA. The TTC approach was used as a way of engaging professionals from different agencies in a brief and focused activity, to provide an opportunity for them to work together on a project. The chosen project focused on the reduction of child obesity and the aim was to consider how they could turn the obesity trajectory around. Being in its second year, the project was viewed as providing a valuable opportunity to consolidate and build on the links already made between health and education to extend and enhance partnership working in the LA.

¹ Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA) was developed by Mark Friedman in the United States. OBA provides a useful framework, or set of questions, to enable multi-agency and individual organisations to prioritise the outcomes they want to improve, ensure that they are planning effectively, involve service users and the wider community in achieving better outcomes, and know whether they are making a difference to the lives of service users.

² The Turning the Curve Approach was developed by Mark Friedman in the United States. Turning the curve describes a process that enables services and agencies to identify the priority outcomes they want to improve. By analysing and understanding trend data, they can develop a strategy for achieving better outcomes. When this data is plotted on a graph, they can see what they need to do to turn the curve or change direction.

The primary way the PTP support was valued was in helping to build new networks and forge relationships between health and EY professionals. This enabled them to share knowledge at both strategic and operational levels. It also importantly ensured that people making strategic decisions were hearing from professionals working directly with families on healthy eating, obesity and health education. As a consequence they were able to work more effectively towards their goal to reduce childhood obesity. However, the departure of the EY Adviser and the Senior Public Health Strategist, who were instrumental in leading this assignment, resulted in a slight loss of momentum. The LA is keen to take the work forward in the future.

Case Study C – Raising Quality in Settings

Case Study C comprised strengthening an EY team so they could work together to motivate childminders and private, voluntary and independent (PVI) settings to improve the quality of their provision. The assignment took around 10 months to complete – starting in January and finishing in October 2012.

The assignment consisted of focused work with the EY team to help them reflect on how they were working together in order to overcome any challenges that were preventing them from achieving their team objectives. This was followed by two PEAL³ training days and the Listening as a way of life – An introduction to listening to young children training day. The training sessions were primarily intended for the EY team, childminders with an Ofsted rating of 'good' and the sponsored childminders working with vulnerable children. The second PEAL training was provided for all childminders and PVI settings. The final stage of the assignment involved ECU training to support participants in raising the quality of provision for two year old children and in particular, disadvantaged two year olds accessing a free early education place. The training addressed the key issues contained within the revised EYFS. A final Review workshop was held with the EY team to reflect on their progress and learning during the assignment.

Both the LA and the SS were very effusive about the success of this assignment in building the efficacy of the EY team in supporting childminders and the PVIs with improving the quality of their provision. Ofsted ratings for childminders and PVI settings increased after the assignment was completed. It is not possible to determine to what extent this improvement was due to the assignment, however both the LA and SS felt that PTP support had contributed to this increase.

Case Study D – Parental Engagement

Case study D sought to help setting staff to engage parents in their children's early learning as part of the drive to improve quality in the PVI sector. The

³ The Parents, Early Years and Learning (PEAL) training programme aims to increase the involvement of parents and families in their young children's early learning and development - both at home and in settings. PEAL also offers support to meet the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and Children's Centre Practice Guidance to work in partnership with parents. It was developed by a consortium of the National Children's Bureau, Coram Family and the London Borough of Camden funded by the DfE.

assignment took around five months to complete – starting in February and finishing in June 2012. The assignment consisted of three separate PEAL training workshops delivered to different setting staff, their managers and the EY team. The training was targeted at settings who proved difficult to engage in the past. At the end of the workshop they set an action plan which was then taken back to the setting to be discussed and implemented. The PEAL training was followed up with an Action Learning Event where all the participants from the previous PEAL training sessions were invited back to discuss their progress. This was intended to operate as a networking session for PEAL participants to share the activities and projects they set up as part of their action plan following the initial PEAL training.

The LA said the training had an instant impact for those who attended (despite a lower take up than anticipated) as it required practitioners to set up practical projects which helped them to embed the learning in their setting. As a consequence there were examples of setting staff starting to build relations and engage more effectively with parents. It had also helped to embed a greater understanding about the value of involving parents in their child's learning.

Case Study E – Improving a Quality Assurance Scheme

The final case study E involved further developing a Quality Assurance Scheme and the networks and forums that would help to engage the sector with this across a LA. The assignment took just over 12 months to complete – starting in July 2011 and finishing in August 2012. The assignment consisted of an initial Action Learning Workshop involving the EY sector and SS's attendance at two Early Years Professional (EYP) Network meetings to explore reactions to plans for rolling out the QA scheme and to consult practitioners about getting involved. This was followed by a training day on Mentoring, a training day on being an Assessor for the EY team and EY settings and a final Action Learning Workshop to explore reflections about how well the mentoring scheme was working.

The remaining assignment resource was used to set up an EYP buddying service for settings who did not have an EYP or for childminders who were developing their own QA plan. Further mentoring workshops were delivered to support the buddies and the SS was also available to provide one to one support for the EYPs and the childminders.

The assignment was very well received by the LA and helped to build relationships and partnerships across the EY sector and enabled participants to realise what could be achieved if they all worked together. The QA scheme was being used at all levels to support the development of quality practice. It was felt to be influencing the processes used by LA staff and settings and therefore influencing front line delivery and contributing positively to outcomes for families.

Assessing the role and value of the PTP Support

- In line with the findings from the case studies discussed above, the end of assignment feedback data (27) and respondents who took part in the online survey (15) were also very positive about the support they

received. Only one respondent had not found their assignment useful as they felt their own staff had as much expertise as the allocated specialist.

- Of the 27 who completed the end of assignment forms, two thirds (i.e. 18 respondents) said that it was very likely their assignment would result in change or influence local practice, and the remaining third said it was quite likely. More than two-thirds anticipated effects in relation to strategy, processes, front-line delivery, partnership working and outcomes for children and young people. Slightly fewer expected the assignments to affect governance issues (10) or user involvement (14).
- Rather unsurprisingly, LAs who took part in the case studies were effusive about the offer of 'free' specialist support and particularly welcomed the resource in the current financial climate. The added value of PTP support was described as the provision of a dedicated expert resource, with an 'outside' perspective, who is able to share their experience and knowledge of working in other LAs, and to be a catalyst for change or to facilitate the delivery of a project.

The critical elements of PTP Support were reported as:

- **Building the assignment from firm foundations** - The success of an assignment crucially depends on the degree to which there is a clear rationale and focus for the project and the level of commitment of all involved. For this reason it is important to invest the time laying the groundwork and building the relationships so that the assignment can grow from firm and strong foundations. This is particularly important in situations where LAs may lack focus and direction.
- **Finding the right person for the job** - the success of assignments was also crucially dependent on finding the right SS for the job. All participants highlighted the importance of the SS's personal qualities, their level of experience, their track record of working with LAs and effecting change, their ability to understand and empathise, their extensive knowledge of the sector and the evidence base. Alongside all of these aptitudes was the need for them to have excellent relationship management skills so they can build relationships very quickly.
- **The importance of maintaining a good working relationship** between the lead in the LA and the SS was reported in all the case studies. Whilst both sides were required to manage the assignment from their own perspective the onus is primarily on the SS to ensure an assignment stays on track.
- **The quality of the SS's facilitation skills** was also highlighted as being critical to the success of the assignments. This is clearly needed throughout the process but particularly for the delivery of training sessions and workshops where a range of professional groups are being brought together each having their own aims and agenda.
- **A flexible approach** to delivering the assignment - The importance of being able to design and tailor assignments to their specific focus (rather than sticking with a set number of days per assignment) was a key element highlighted by SSs.

- A final and lasting way to ensure success is by **building a stage in the process which enables the LA to embed the learning.**

A number of suggestions were made for how to maximise the impact of the PTP programme. Inevitably these build upon their comments and reflections about the PTP model and the elements that they felt were critical to its success. These included the provision of more on-going support and feedback for SSs, evaluating the adaptations of the support packages used by SSs, embedding an evaluation plan within an assignment, providing more promotional information about ways in which LAs might use PTP Support to help them scope their brief and building in more time for reflection and review between SS and LA during an assignment.

1. Introduction

1.1 Context

The Early Years Peer to Peer Support (PTP) Programme, funded by the Department for Education (DfE), was launched in April 2011 to provide a package of tailored support to address issues of quality in the early years (EY) sector. It was set up for two years by the Early Childhood Unit (ECU) at NCB in partnership with the Centre for Excellence and Outcomes (C4EO) and was designed to improve outcomes for young children and their families. The package of support was delivered by a team of EY sector specialists (SSs) to local authorities (LAs). Since the programme was launched 80 assignments have been allocated to LAs and organisations across the country. Additionally the PTP Support Programme ran quarterly regional events, provided 30 one day free training offers, produced a fortnightly bulletin and webpages to ensure regular information sharing across the EY sector nationally.

The NCB Research Centre was commissioned by the ECU to carry out an independent evaluation of the PTP Support Programme assignments. This report presents the findings from two components of the evaluation comprising an online end of assignment survey and five case studies to explore how LAs used the PTP support and any impacts it was perceived to have.

1.2 The Peer-to-Peer Support Programme

The programme involved the use of NCB's and C4EO's early years specialists, who offer a package of support to LAs to:

- Identify and work towards better outcomes for children and families
- Improve leadership and performance in the Early Years (EY) sector
- Embed peer-to-peer support in the sector
- Explain the requirements of the revised Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

The package of support offered to LAs or organisations in the EY sector (e.g. private nurseries/social enterprises) is tailored to address the quality issues identified by participating services and took the form of up to ten days of sector specialist (SS) support.

All LAs were contacted with an offer of free PTP support⁴ – to focus on issues which they identified as important for them in terms of improving quality of services and outcomes for children and families. Furthermore, LAs with

⁴ Details of the PTP support programme were circulated to LAs and other EY providers via networks including Black Voices Network (BVN), Early Childhood Forum (ECF), the Local Authority Early Years Network (LAEYN), Young Children's Voices Network (YCVN) and the National Quality Improvement Network (NQIN). Information on the programme was also included in relevant ECF bulletins and on the Early Childhood Unit (ECU) and C4EO's websites.

identified issues with quality in EY service were offered more targeted support⁵. The support was delivered by 27 accredited SSs and a total of 80 'assignments' were undertaken⁶ during the programme.

In summary, the package of support offered to LAs and others in the EY sector comprised a SS:

- Scoping an assignment with the LA or other EY organisation to identify issues of quality they wanted to improve and suggest ways of tailoring support to address these.
- Delivering a package of support (e.g. training for staff, support on measuring impact, advising on how to increase parental engagement etc.) to help address the locally identified needs.
- Facilitating a review of the assignment at the end to check aims and objectives are met.

1.3 Evaluation Aims

The aims of the evaluation were to assess:

- The effectiveness of the PTP Support Programme in enabling LAs and other EY providers to address their own identified issues of quality.
- How, and in what ways, the PTP support offered to LAs and other EY organisation has influenced local system changes e.g. improvements to leadership, strategy, processes, front-line delivery of services and the resulting outcomes for children and their families.

1.4 Evaluation Design

A small number of interviews with SSs and LAs were carried out in the early stages of the programme, in spring 2012, to inform the programme development. This report is based on the subsequent evaluation activity including:

An Online 'end of assignment' survey

A month after completing a PTP assignment recipients were invited to take part in a short online survey (see Appendix A). This explored their experience of the PTP Support assignment and reflections on its value, role and impact. The survey covered:

⁵ This was achieved by referring to EYFS Profile results for LAs, particularly in relation to Communication, Language and Literacy (CLL) and Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSE) scores. Those LAs with less than 50 per cent of children working securely in CLL and PSE were targeted first.

⁶ Of which 64 were completed by the end of March 2013, two were still in progress and 14 were cancelled due to a number of pressures (such as restructures and competing priorities) taking place within the LA.

- The delivery of the PTP support package and the extent to which it met their requirements.
- Perceptions of the success of the PTP assignment in meeting their needs.
- Perceptions about the impact of the PTP assignment.

It also asked whether they were willing to take part in the follow up case studies.

A link to the survey was circulated by email to each LA or other EY organisation that received PTP support approximately four to eight weeks after the assignment was completed. Of the 64 recipients of PTP Support, 37 had completed their assignment when the on line survey was carried out and 15 of these recipients responded – resulting in a response rate of 41%. All but one of these respondents was a LA.

In addition to the survey data collected by NCB Research Centre, C4EO collated quantitative data from end of assignment feedback forms. By the time this report was written feedback forms were completed by 27 LAs or other EY organisations where the assignment had been completed – a response rate of almost 61% from the 44 assignments that had been completed at the time of writing the report.

Five Case studies with LAs who received PTP support

In order to complement and extend the survey findings five case studies were carried out. These were designed to provide detailed evidence about the experience of setting up, delivering and participating in the assignment and to specifically explore reflections about the role and value of the PTP support and perceptions about any resulting impacts.

Each case study aimed to include up to three interviews – one interview with the person in each LA or other EY provider who led the assignment, one interview with the lead SS (where there was more than one involved) who delivered the PTP support and one interview with one of the beneficiaries who received the PTP support.

A total of 14 interviews that were carried out:

- 5 were with the LA lead
- 5 with Sector Specialists
- 4 with Beneficiaries who 'received' the PTP Support by for example taking part in the training provided (as in the case of a manager of a private nursery or an area manager in two of the LAs) or they were actively involved in the workshops, developing an early years strategy or build multi agency partnerships (such as in the case of a head teacher in one LA).

The original intention was to select assignments that finished more than three to four months previously. However, as many of the assignments were still in progress there were a low number of completed assignments to choose between. As a consequence we selected three case studies where the

assignment finished, between three and 12 months before the evaluation started, and two completed more recently.

As far as was feasible within the eligible sample of completed assignments the case studies were selected to ensure variation in terms of:

- Nature of the PTP support required
- Nature of the PTP support provided
- Timing and duration of the assignment
- Geography (ensuring rural and urban areas)
- LA type and size.

The interviews were carried out over the telephone using a topic guide (see the topic guide used with LA's⁷ in Appendix B) that outlined the main topics that were to be addressed. Each interview lasted around an hour and were carried out during February and the beginning of March 2013.

1.5 Profile of PTP Assignments

By the beginning of April 2013, a total of 64 assignments were complete, two were still in progress and fourteen were cancelled after starting due to specific issues in the LA such as a team restructure. Assignments were provided for LAs with the exception of one PTP assignment which was delivered with a voluntary and community based EY organisation.

Content of assignments

As part of the survey, respondents provided brief descriptions of their PTP support assignments. These are listed in Box 1 below, to give a flavour of the range of areas covered. Among the 15 assignments described, training figured prominently, alongside support with policy reviews, research and use of data. These appeared to be typical of the broader set of 64 assignments.

Box 1. Content of PTP support assignments described by survey respondents

- Action learning sets training delivered to development workers, EY support teachers, lead practitioners and Early Years Professionals (EYPs)
- Assessor and Mentor training for staff and EYPs from the Private Voluntary and Independent (PVI) childcare sector
- Mentor and Assessing training for staff and EYP's peer mentoring between EYP's and childminders with a focus on Quality Improvement
- Developing the quality of childminders. This included support meetings with the strategic staff team, training for childminders and reviewing practice
- Research into job descriptions from other authorities, sharing practice and support to work with colleagues to revise existing job expectations

⁷ This topic guide is very similar to the one used with Sector Specialists and Beneficiaries.

- Reviewing current structures in place. Ideas to develop services further - linked to the 2 year old offer. Update on current practice and research
- Support and challenge around outcomes, data, supporting research evidence, and role of "critical friend" in reading submission and suggesting improvements
- Targeted support for parent involvement in EYFS in all types of settings
- A training workshop on turning the curve (TTC). Professionals came together to learn how to use this process to meet desired targets in relation to raising standards in settings, schools and childminders around health and improving.
- Using data more intelligently to provide a robust rationale for supporting continued investment within the 3 and 4 year old funding to ensure appropriately targeted resources for maximum impact.
- Training for school staff in best practice and the national picture for Early Help
- Training practitioners in EY settings
- Training to senior staff and the advisory board on outcome based accountability
- Two days PEAL Train the Trainer training was delivered to the Quality Improvement team who work with PVI settings. The idea is for the Quality Improvement team to now deliver to targeted PVI settings.
- Work with a range of partners, including the EY Team to develop an EY Strategy. The peer to peer support provided facilitation of meetings to bring partners together, to learn from research and to model good partnership working.

1.4 Analysis and reporting

The interviews were recorded, summarised and then analysed using 'NVivo 10', a rigorous analytical method. This approach involves producing a series of thematic worksheets which allow for the full range of views and experiences to be compared and contrasted in a comprehensive and systematic framework, enabling analysis within and across interviews. It also ensures the findings are grounded in and driven by the accounts of participants.

The remainder of this report is divided into six further chapters:

Chapters 2 to 6 present the five case studies – each chapter sets out the context and aims of the assignment, an overview of the PTP support delivered, reflections on how well the assignment worked and perceptions about any resulting impacts and the evidence to substantiate this.

In the final chapter (**Chapter 7**) we draw together some of the key messages arising from the five case studies reflecting on: the value and role of PTP Support, the key elements that are critical to ensuring a successful assignment, and suggestions for how to maximise the impact of the PTP programme.

In order to preserve participants' anonymity, case studies are referenced with a letter A to E and quotations are labelled by the role of the individual. The purposive nature of the qualitative sample design, however, means that we cannot draw any numerical or statistical conclusions about the prevalence of views and experiences described in Chapters 2 to 7.

It is important also to note the timing of the fieldwork (January-February 2013) in relation to when the case studies finished – spanning a period between March 2012 and October 2012. As a consequence participants varied in the degree to which they could recall the detail of the assignment and the resulting impacts (as some of the participants were reflecting back over the last 12 months).

2. Case Study 'A' – Developing an Early Years Strategy

The first case study assignment focused on developing an early years (EY) strategy for a local authority (LA). It involved the EY team and key stakeholders who were working across all the key services in the main districts in the LA. The case study was based on interviews with the Senior Adviser for EY who led the assignment within the LA, the Sector Specialist (SS) who delivered the assignment and a Head Teacher (HT) of a nursery school who was involved in developing the EY strategy. The assignment took just under 12 months to complete – starting in autumn 2011 and finishing in September 2012.

2.1 Context

Early years became a priority area for the LA as a result of their Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) results for children aged 5. Despite attempts since 2008 to improve their outcomes and build commitment to early years amongst senior managers the LA continued to perform below the national average. The setting up of a new EYFS team (in 2011) which was operating within a re-structured Children's Services proved a timely moment for learning about the Peer to Peer (PTP) support. When an email arrived from C4EO addressed to the Director of Children's Services – they agreed that it would be a *'good way of guiding us and helping us to do some thinking around why [their LA's] outcomes were so low'*. The Senior Adviser for EY was looking for *'outside eyes'* and help thinking through how they could improve their results.

2.2 Setting up and scoping the Assignment

The LA initially requested support for strategies to narrow the gap in early years and to look at how they could improve overall outcomes by the end of the Foundation Stage, with a particular focus on effective integrated working. Underpinning the need for a strong EY strategy was a lack of joined up working across professionals at a senior level, limited appreciation about the importance and value of EY amongst senior managers, as well as the poor profile of results for outcomes at EYFS.

The LA specifically wanted:

- Greater understanding of the EY sector
- Support to help influence and change attitudes and perceptions across the EY sector within the LA
- And ultimately to get better outcomes for children.

After completing the request form a half day meeting was set up between the SS and the Senior Adviser for EY to talk through the context and scope the assignment in the autumn of 2011. The assignment took about six weeks to set up.

The Senior Adviser for EY said that the experience of the SS *'fitted in really well with what they wanted to do – She had the right level of expertise – She knew*

the whole sector really well. She had done a lot of research and a lot of work in the sector.' The SS understood that they needed to break down the silos between professional boundaries and reduce the duplication of work which had become more apparent following their recent restructure. The Senior Adviser also felt the SS could help them think about how to work more effectively as staff numbers had been severely cut.

Also, the SS was valued for having a very gentle approach – *'It wasn't I am going to come in and tell you how to do this'* – but instead she said *'Have you considered?'* *'Do you know about?'* *'Have you heard of?'* *'What do you think about?'* This approach enabled the LA team to think about the challenges and reach a shared resolution.

2.3 The Assignment

The assignment took just under 12 months to complete – starting in autumn 2011 and finishing in September 2012. The initial agreement was for a five day assignment but this was extended to 10 days in order to allow time to carry out the training to help develop the strategy.

The assignment consisted of the following activities:

- **An initial meeting** to prepare for and plan support for the EY strategy development.
- **Attending two workshops** facilitated by an external consultant on leadership and transformational change to help prepare the way for developing the EY strategy.
- **Delivering an Outcomes Based Accountability Workshop** to the EY Team focusing on how they work as a team, considering their priorities for the next 12 months, their plans for how to achieve these, and consider how to overcome the challenges and barriers and 'turn the curve' so they can improve their outcomes. At the end of the workshop they produced work plans which helped them to consider how to change the way they were working.
- **An Early Years Strategy Development Workshop** with professionals working across the LA in all the main districts. This included about 60 people from across all the key sectors including: senior managers from health, health visitors and midwives, senior managers and representatives of head teachers from nursery, infant and primary schools, representatives from the private voluntary and independent (PVI) sector, including childminders and children's centres, senior managers from children's services and members of the EY Team.

During the day they examined relevant research and policy in relation to what works to help build a strategy, engaged in facilitated work around vision, principles and priorities. At the end of the workshop they came up with a vision, their principles and priorities and had an overarching delivery plan to deliver an EY strategy in the LA both at the county and district level so there was a district and delivery plan for each area.

- **A review workshop** where they reflected and reviewed the outputs from the previous workshop and explored and mapped progress towards their goals.

In between each of these days the SS worked with the EY Senior Adviser to plan the work. The SS also provided support by telephone and email.

2.4 Challenges delivering the assignment

Initially it was proposed that the support would be provided for a pre-planned programme of meetings which would result in an EY strategy being developed for presentation to the LA's Cabinet in February 2012. By the time the assignment started the timescale had slipped as it took longer to build strategic support and stakeholder representation. Subsequently an alternative approach was taken and the support was extended to include a further assignment. The SS said there were also a few delays trying to work around busy schedules.

Aside from the time the only other issue was trying to ensure the right people attended the workshop. The Senior Adviser for EY worked very hard to ensure that all the key people were invited to the workshop to develop the strategy. The only people who were missing from the discussion were representatives of social care but that was because the LA was having an Ofsted inspection at the time.

2.5 Reflections

The support completely met the EY Senior Adviser's expectations. All that she wanted to be put in place was put in place and is now working. She said they *'worked over a 12 month period, from a low baseline, to actually having a significant strategy in place, right the way through from decisions, principles and priorities right the way through to individual action plans for local areas.'*

The Senior Adviser said the SS was very easy to work with – right from the start she understood the issues for the LA and supported the development of a new EY team. The SS's experience and ability to facilitate and to talk to people and to build relationships very quickly was felt to be key to this. Also the Senior Adviser for EY said the SS exposed the LA to research that was helpful for influencing their partners.

Beyond the desire to help build the strategy, a Head Teacher (HT) wanted to get involved in the PTP Support out of her commitment to improving the way PVI's and schools work together in partnership and share practice so they can improve the outcomes for children.

The HT echoed the reflections of the EY adviser praising her knowledge and facilitation skills. She said the SS encouraged them to think through the issues and how to address these. The SS posed questions and provided an opportunity for talking in groups. The SS would skilfully come and listen to their smaller group discussions and help to move the discussion on by highlighting research evidence, drawing links or just providing further information. *'You could tell she was an EY enthusiast and she was very*

knowledgeable'. The SS worked very well with the Senior Adviser for EY and understood the issues within the LA. Importantly, the workshops delivered at both the county and district level. They produced action plans for all the areas with strands linking to both local and county priorities.

We are on a journey and have made a good start. I think it has worked well for us by thinking about it from a County perspective and also at a local level because we have such a big and diverse County.

Head Teacher

The Senior Adviser for EY said the aim for the future is to have stronger partnership working with all the agencies involved in EY so they work effectively, develop and share good practice. When they have full commitment from all professionals working successfully together the professionals will know what services are available so they can signpost families more effectively, thereby resulting in better outcomes for children and better support for families which will have a positive impact on their profile results.

2.6 Impact

We have got a much stronger more secure EYs as a result of it

Senior Adviser for Early Years

As a result of the PTP Support the Senior Adviser for EY said they had an effective EY strategy, involving a wide range of partners from across children's services, health services, maintained schools, and PVI settings (including childminders and children's centres being run by the voluntary sector). She said that this work will forge ahead with many more agencies and people being drawn in, in order to improve the lives of the most vulnerable children in the LA.

She said that during the process of developing the strategy people literally started talking to each other. It also provided the opportunity to bring all the stakeholders together in a way that had not happened previously. Specifically, it ensured that health professionals were actually involved in the discussions and working in partnership with the other professionals in the sector. The development of the strategy also resulted in a series of area-based working groups being set up which operated across themes and enabled people to work across areas and geographical boundaries.

Whilst the outcomes for children aged 5 rose by 11% between 2011 and 2012 it seems unlikely that the PTP support could have contributed to these as the assignment was being delivered during the same time frame. The Senior Adviser for EY also questioned whether there was any link as the strategy focused on younger children. That said, she thought the involvement of head teachers in developing the early years strategy will have ensured that the messages were passed back to HT groups and that may have had an impact on the results. The other connected factor that she identified as having contributed to the improved outcomes is that they worked really closely with reception teachers, providing more training and also, moderated every single

school (rather than 25% of schools) which provided an opportunity to challenge really low results before they were submitted.

Also the strategy enabled them to remove the gap between maintained and private providers so that they engaged in joined up working in the footprint clusters and could share practice – *'if we can improve what the children are receiving and their outcomes at a nursery and at PVI level then that has an impact when they move into reception so they can move on within reception and achieve more at the end of the profile at the end of reception'*.

Without the PTP support the Senior Adviser for EY said – *'we almost certainly wouldn't have a strategy with all the people involved.'* They might have achieved their positive outcomes for one year because the LA would have gone ahead with the moderation of all schools but it might not have been as successful without the advice of the SS about how to do this. The SS gave her the confidence and encouragement to go ahead with a full moderation of all schools and all schools cooperated without a single complaint.

2.7 Evidencing the outcomes

The EY Senior Adviser provided the following evidence for the outcomes resulting from the PTP support:

- They now have an EY strategy that is working really well in the districts, they have a Children's Centre Footprint Network meeting where people are starting to take ownership for themselves and relying less on the EY team.
- Silo working has stopped - *'one of the best things is that whereas before people weren't working together they were working in silos now they are working together'* e.g. the Footprint cluster meetings where people are working together on the same rather than different issues. Health teams are also fully embedded in the network.
- A lot of the schools have said that for first time they feel as though they are much better supported knowing where to go when they want health input and who to link in to for social care input. They are also linking in through the clusters which would not have happened without the strategy and partnership working.
- All the EY advisors have been trained in the Early Language Development Programme and some of the practitioners that they work with are now providing joint delivery sessions.
- *'All the partners are now starting to want to be drawn in'* so for example the person who is responsible for fostering and adoptive parents approached one of the EY Team Managers about getting involved in their district level meetings. And they also asked the EY team to deliver training for foster carers in the EYFS, particularly thinking about early language so they can support the children they were fostering.
- And the EY Team is starting to increase their influence and build their links with EY practitioners in colleges and schools where they have been invited to deliver sessions on EY.

- At the district level it has strengthened links between services. They now have EY district strategy meetings so each of the districts manages an action plan for its own area and they meet regularly. They are in the process of setting up EY cluster meetings which will be centred around the Children's Centre footprints and bring various agencies together so as to enable practitioners to raise issues they need support for but also to find out what services are on offer within the locality.

The HT of a nursery reflected that the strategy had enabled her to build on the pre-existing links they had locally with the children's centre. She can now share information about the children's centre with families in her nursery and also with the local heads partnership (combining all the primary and secondary schools in the town) raising awareness of the services on offer in the children's centre. She concluded that:

The Strategy gave us a way to strengthen those links and to do our best for the children and families, without that strategy we wouldn't have the route to help make a difference for children and families. The action plan was a driver and gave a focus to help the partnerships work.

3. Case Study 'B' – Multi Agency Working

The second case study assignment involved strengthening multi agency working between the Early Years (EY) team, health, children's centres, early years settings and schools. Within the LA the assignment was led by the EY Adviser who worked in partnership with the Senior Public Health Strategist. Due to the EY Adviser having left the LA and the Senior Public Health Strategist being on maternity leave the case study is based on interviews with the Project Coordinator and the EY Advisory Teacher in the LA, the Sector Specialist (SS) who delivered the assignment and a Head Teacher (HT) of a nursery school who was involved from the outset. The assignment was carried out between October 2011 and the end of March 2012.

3.1 Context

Building on a recent restructure of children's centres, this inner city LA was looking to drive forward practice in integrating services across all those working with young children. Given the profile of deprivation and health inequality in the LA there was a particular focus on joint working between health, children's centres, early years settings and schools. In addition, although EYSFP results were improving they were still below the national average.

As part of a drive to maximise impact from their work in early years the EY Adviser was keen to find a way to bridge the gaps between these different agencies working together. He was also concerned about accountability and being able to demonstrate that their innovative projects were making a difference and that all partners had a clear sense of the outcomes they were working towards. Recent work had highlighted the need to share understanding about how to define and measure outcomes.

3.2 Setting up and scoping the Assignment

The LA knew they wanted some kind of culture change and shift in interagency relationships between EY, schools and health staff but they were unsure how to achieve this within the scope of a short assignment. In order to help the LA think through possible options for achieving their goals and creating a feasible and manageable brief the SS provided background material on various different approaches for how they could work as a team. He provided information on Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA)⁸ and the Turning the Curve (TTC)

⁸ Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA) was developed by Mark Friedman in the United States. OBA provides a useful framework, or set of questions, to enable multi-agency and individual organisations to prioritise the outcomes they want to improve, ensure that they are planning effectively, involve service users and the wider community in achieving better outcomes, and know whether they are making a difference to the lives of service users.

approach⁹. After reading the material the EY Adviser subsequently requested both options. He viewed the TTC approach as a good way to engage a range of professionals from different agencies in a short and focused activity, which would provide the opportunity and space for them to work together on a project where they have the potential to make a difference. In order to 'sell' the idea he wanted to find a project that was of mutual concern for all agencies and so would seem a worthwhile use of their time. The focus on outcomes was also felt to ensure that local partners would be willing to input into an action plan.

The scoping phase took about 6 weeks to complete involving phone calls and a face to face meeting as well as time for the LA lead to reflect on the information provided. It also took time for the LA lead to consult and negotiate with other agencies to assess their appetite and buy-in to the plan along with their willingness to actually engage in the workshops.

The agreed assignment was to provide an opportunity to explore approaches to developing and measuring outcomes by bringing together partners from a variety of agencies and teams with the purpose of:

- Supporting more integrated working between EY settings, schools, and health services in the LA
- Developing a shared understanding about approaches to outcomes amongst the different agencies and organisations
- Applying outcomes based working to a specific project with a TTC event
- Embedding the outcomes approach to raise the opportunities for new joint projects to successfully achieve funding and investment on the basis of credible and measurable outcomes.

3.3 The Assignment

The assignment was carried out between October 2011 and the end of March 2012. The agreement with C4EO was for a 5 day assignment which was divided between two SSs so as to deliver the range of skills and experience required. In practice, it took longer and each SS spent additional time providing support (approximately 1.5 days).

The assignment consisted of:

- **A one-day bespoke Outcomes Based Accountability Workshop** held at the beginning of March for 16 participants. During the day they explored – from an interagency perspective – the definition of outcomes, inputs and outputs and different data collection approaches to measuring outcomes. At the end of the day they discussed how they could best use the TTC method in the LA. They also collectively identified a project and focus that they wanted to turn the curve on. The LA lead brought along various data

⁹ The Turning the Curve Approach was developed by Mark Friedman in the United States. Turning the curve describes a process that enables services and agencies to identify the priority outcomes they want to improve. By analysing and understanding trend data, they can develop a strategy for achieving better outcomes. When this data is plotted on a graph, they can see what they need to do to turn the curve or change direction.

sets and project case studies to help them identify a suitable project. It transpired that there was an existing project which presented a set of challenges for them to address as a group and there was also data available to measure outcomes on.

The project chosen focused on the reduction of child obesity in recognition of the rising national levels of obesity but also because this was a particularly acute issue in the LA. The aim of the project was to look at how they could turn the obesity trajectory around. Being in its second year the project was viewed as providing a valuable opportunity to consolidate and build on the links already made between health and education to work in partnership.

- This process helped them design a **Turning the Curve workshop** which was held about 3 weeks later. It focused on children's health outcomes linked to the project. The list of participants who were invited to attend was slightly expanded from the previous workshop to ensure all the relevant agencies were involved. During the day there was an introduction to the project and the Children and Young People's Strategic Plan. They examined data on children's health in the local area and then there was a brief introduction to the TTC tool so they could agree how to approach the project as a group. Participants then worked in smaller groups considering what was having an impact on obesity rates and what they could do to try and change these.

At the end of the event the LA lead and his team wrote up the notes and produced an action plan which was circulated to all participants. The LA lead left the council soon after the action plan was produced and responsibility to implement the plan was passed on to his team and the project lead for the project.

3.4 Challenges delivering the assignment

The main challenges with the assignment were:

- Deciding on a specific project which would be feasible in the timescale and that would also contribute towards the broader aims of achieving a cultural change in interagency relationships.
- Managing the timetable and factoring in the inevitable delays of scheduling meetings with busy people.
- The time pressures for participants attending the workshops. This was felt to be particularly challenging for those working in schools as the second workshop was held very close to the end of term.
- Coordinating the workshops - ensuring that they included the key stakeholders and that everyone had sufficient notice so they could attend the event where possible. Not everyone was able to come to the second day, but nevertheless there was a really good range of professionals around the table.
- The additional time required to co-facilitate the assignment and design a bespoke workshop.

3.5 Reflections on the assignment

The workshops were described as 'good', 'fine' and well set up. The SSs were praised for being 'very good presenters' and 'good trainers' and for having 'facilitated the group really well' and created 'lots of opportunities for clarification and discussion'. 'They [the SSs] knew the context quite well' 'They both had a lot of relevant experience for what they were trying to do with us'.

It was assessed as a 'very useful training' because 'they learnt something new [and] they learnt an approach [that] they could use [to] get different people from different services together...working in an economical way with their time'.

The Project Coordinator and the EY Advisory Teacher in the LA reflected that the EY Adviser was instrumental in driving the assignment forward and securing the engagement of the different services. They also highlighted the important role of the Senior Public Health Strategist in encouraging health colleagues to be involved in the workshops.

One of the workshop participants, a Head Teacher (HT) of a nursery school, was involved from the outset. He welcomed the opportunity of being part of the assignment as a way of addressing obesity in the LA. He was also particularly interested in the TTC approach and the way this could be applied to their LA and its potential use for him within his school.

Whilst he highlighted the skills of the facilitators he was concerned that the workshops were too generic and abstract and had concentrated too extensively on the bigger picture, rather than specifically relating this to the project and the reduction of child obesity. He wanted to know what difference they were going to make to the lives and outcomes of young children and families in their local community. For this reason he felt it would have been useful if they could have spent more time focusing on how they could achieve these outcomes.

3.6 Impact

At the end of the assignment the SS reflected that the TTC event resulted in a clear action plan which included establishing wider partnerships, gathering more data and evidence, making specific improvements to the way the project was being delivered, involving service users and lobbying for change at the borough and national level to improve children's health chances.

He said that almost regardless of whether they were able to turn the curve the PTP support helped to build new networks and forge relationships between health and EY professionals. This enabled them to share knowledge at both the strategic and operational levels. It also importantly ensured that people making strategic decisions were hearing about what it is like for people working with families on healthy eating, obesity and health education.

Testament to the success of the workshop is the request by the LA to book the SSs again to run another TTC event. Also the work around OBA has helped them push forward an interagency debate about outcomes and about having a shared language and understanding about them. That said the SS highlighted

the need to be realistic about the impact that two workshops can have. Also, he pointed out that the impact will depend on the work that the EY team does locally – taking those relationships that have been built and the outputs from the TTC event and actually making sure they are embedded into local practice.

The LA maintained that the workshops provided an opportunity for them to sit around a table together and have time to listen to each other's perspectives about how best they could reduce the alarming levels of obesity. *'Out of that we had ideas about how we could strengthen our links. So I think it was like having the time together... that was structured and kept us really focused on what we needed to think about together... but at the same time we were really able to get an understanding of what each other's perspective was and what people's work was and how we could really join up together'*. In addition, the resulting actions arising from the workshop that the LA implemented have produced useful outcomes (see Section 3.7).

The HT reflected that the *'workshops consolidated and reaffirmed my professional views about the value of multi agency working'*. *'So the training has highlighted and again possibly reaffirmed my view that we can bring about change in a positive way'*. Through helping to build relationships across services and push forward the outcomes around children's healthy eating he said that the TTC workshop helped the project achieve its aim of reducing the level of obesity in the LA.

The LA reported that the outcomes set were achieved. Following the departure of the EY Adviser and the Senior Public Health Strategist who were instrumental in leading this assignment, the project coordinator has continued to implement the actions. As it has been a time of change in the LA further work with C4EO has not been developed.

3.7 Evidencing the outcomes

The Project Coordinator and the EY Advisory Teacher in the LA provided the following evidence for the outcomes resulting from the PTP support:

- Multi agency working and a shared approach and language about outcomes are evident although they have not specifically tracked this since the assignment.
- The Strategy Policy and Performance Team in the LA have been looking into setting up a TTC workshop.
- The training has helped them to set and measure outcomes on projects and the EY Advisory Teacher in the LA said she used the approach with her team. Also, she said that when she is running a project she might not necessarily use the TTC method but she nevertheless considers the outcomes they need to address. *'I have not used the whole approach per se [TTC] but I have definitely found being part of it has kind of informed my practice in where I have been responsible for projects'*.
- They have got a much stronger link with parks as a result of setting up forest school training for practitioners, an action that came out of the TTC workshop.

- They have been able to think about how settings and school staff could support and encourage parents to access free vitamins. They have set up an initiative to promote Vitamin D supplements in the LA for pregnant women and women with young children.
- The project became a C4EO validated practice example.

The HT reflected that the success of the project in reducing the level of obesity proves that it is possible to change the habits of children and families and bring about change in a deprived area – and that obesity does not need to be a self-fulfilling prophecy just because a child is brought up in a deprived area. He said it was reaffirming to see that professionals of different disciplines that have a shared objective can bring about a greater degree of change for children and families *'It was good ... to remind ourselves that we are all working together on the same outcomes.... I think it has reminded everybody to work together.'*

The LA officials concluded that there is now a real desire in their service 'to join up' because they do realise that they can be more effective together. The work has been put on hold because of a change in management but they are sure that they will want to continue it in the future.

4. Case Study 'C' – Raising Quality in Settings

The third case study assignment involved developing an EY team and supporting their work with childminders and the private voluntary and independent (PVI) sector in order to raise the quality of provision. The case study is based on interviews with the Children's Centre and Childcare Service Manager in the LA who led the assignment and the Sector Specialist (SS) who delivered the assignment. The assignment took around 10 months to complete – starting in January and finishing in October 2012.

4.1 Context

Following a restructure a new Early Years (EY) team was set up in 2011 to raise the quality of EY provision and improve the outcomes for children. Despite initial progress developing and supporting EY providers there was a need to build stronger links with childminders and the PVI settings to improve the quality of their provision. Rather fortuitously the offer of PTP support arrived at the same time as the Children's Centre and Childcare Service Manager was considering how she could work more effectively with PVIs and childminders, where they lacked experience. The LA was '*delighted*' to accept the offer of support from C4EO and they submitted a request form at the beginning of 2012. At that time only half of the PVIs and just over half of the childminders were rated as 'good' by Ofsted.

4.2 Setting up and scoping the Assignment

Their initial request was for support to develop a strong EY team so they could work together to motivate childminders and PVI settings to improve the quality of their provision. The LA team had limited experience of working with PVIs and childminders and were specifically looking for support to become more effective in this area. They were also interested to learn what other LAs were doing to improve the quality of their childminders and PVI sector.

The Children's Centre and Childcare Service Manager said the PTP support was easy to apply for and there had been no difficulties scoping the assignment. She spoke to two SSs – one who carried out the scoping and one who delivered the actual assignment. The scoping involved email correspondence and various conversations over the telephone to discuss the LA's requirements and clarify the focus of the tailored support which '*perfectly*' reflected their original request. They agreed that the SS would help the EY team to review their progress and explore how to enable childminders and PVIs to take more responsibility for improving their quality, particularly in the area of early learning. They decided that SS would deliver practice development training for the childminders, PVI setting managers, practitioners and the EY team. The idea was that they would build relationships and influence practice in these settings through working alongside each other during the training. They also built into the scope an aim to increase awareness of the EYFS to reflect the changes that were due to happen later in the year.

The SS who carried out the scoping selected another SS to deliver the assignment. This SS had knowledge and experience of working with childminders and could also deliver the Parents Early Years and Learning (PEAL) training and Listening as a way of life – An introduction to listening to young children course. It took about a month to set up the assignment.

4.3 The Assignment

The assignment took around 10 months to complete – starting in January and finishing in October 2012. The initial agreement was for a five day assignment but this was extended to six and a half days in order to allow time to carry out further training. An additional day of training was also provided for the LA as part of the free one day training offer, also part of the PTP programme delivered by the Early Childhood Unit.

The assignment consisted of the following activities:

- **A Review day with the EY Team** to identify the barriers to improving the quality of provision from childminders and the PVI settings. During the day they explored how they were working as a team, the nature of their needs, their progress towards achieving their objectives and the challenges that were preventing them addressing these. The SS played back the issues they raised and challenged them in a supportive way. She also enabled them to compare the positive work they were doing with children's centres to how they were working with childminders and the PVIs.
- **Two PEAL training¹⁰ days** – the first PEAL day was delivered to the EY team, childminders with an ofsted rating of 'good' and the sponsored childminders who work for the LA with vulnerable children. The LA wanted to target these childminders first as a way of motivating the rest of the childminders. The second PEAL day was open to all childminders and PVI settings. The SS sought additional funds in order to extend the training to a wider range of people as she felt this would help to raise the quality across all settings. Whilst this second day was not officially part of 'the scoped assignment' it was nevertheless addressing the original objectives.
- **Listening as a way of life – An introduction to listening to young children¹¹** – this day built on the previous PEAL training and involved looking at the power of listening to young children as a way of improving

¹⁰ The Parents, Early Years and Learning (PEAL) training programme aims to increase the involvement of parents and families in their young children's early learning and development - both at home and in settings. PEAL also offers support to meet the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and Children's Centre Practice Guidance to work in partnership with parents. It was developed by a consortium of the National Children's Bureau, Coram Family and the London Borough of Camden funded by the DfE.

¹¹ Listening as a Way of Life – An introduction to listening to young children - The course aims to inspire and enable practitioners to listen to young children and involve them in decisions which affect their lives, through everyday practice. This course is part of the Young Children's Voices Network training and support available from the Early Childhood Unit at NCB.

quality. The training session was delivered to the same group of childminders alongside the EY team. The SS delivered this training day alongside another trainer with specific expertise and experience in listening to young children and enabling their participation in decisions that affect them.

- **Meeting the needs of Two Year Olds; Quality Provision for 2 Year olds Training** – As part of the discussions that took place during the initial assignment the EY team raised the challenges of supporting practitioners to ensure there is appropriate provision for two year olds in line with the introduction of the revised EYFS. They were concerned about the lack of interest amongst the PVI settings and childminders to take up the two year old offer of free places for disadvantaged two year olds. This training day provided the opportunity for children’s centres, childminders, the PVI sector and the EY team to train alongside each other. The training aimed to support participants to raise the quality of provision in meeting the needs of two year old children and in particular, disadvantaged two year olds accessing a free place. It addressed the key issues contained within the revised EYFS such as the emphasis on helping parents to support their children’s learning, listening to children and the progress check at age two.
- **Review workshop** – A final review day was held with the EY team facilitated by the SS. During the day they reflected on their progress and learning during the assignment. They revisited the aims and challenges they experienced before the start of the assignment in March 2012 which previously prevented them achieving these aims.

4.4 Challenges delivering the Assignment

Both the Children’s Centre and Childcare Service Manager and the SS said the assignment went really well and they did not have any issues to specifically report. There were, however, some minor delays resulting from the organisation of the training such as the need to delay the training until after the summer holidays. There was also an issue with lower turnout at the second PEAL training. The SS also encouraged the LA to think about providing the training to all childminders in the longer term so as to help raise the quality overall as this would be key to achieving their target.

4.5 Reflections

It was a really good service and it came just at the perfect time for [the] LA and they got the best person to do it with us

LA lead

Both the Children’s Centre and Childcare Service Manager and the SS were very effusive about the success of this assignment. The support was felt to be really useful for the EY team, the childminders and the PVIs. The Children’s Centre and Childcare Service Manager said the skills of the SS matched their needs ‘100%’. *‘She was perfectly pitched for our needs’*. It was evident that they

worked very well together and mutually benefited from the partnership. Testament to its success was the on-going ad hoc contact that the SS continued to have with the EY Team – with the SS continuing to share additional information and useful links and the EY team reciprocating with further feedback about their progress. The Children’s Centre and Childcare Service Manager said the *‘SS is an excellent practitioner... she challenged our team... very well. It empowered us really but then she worked with the childminders and the PVI workers in a very skilled manner as well’*.

The Children’s Centre and Childcare Service Manager appreciated the SS’s personable manner her *‘perfect communication’* her knowledge, skills and ability to understand. She valued the way she constructively and supportively challenged them from the outset, kept them on track and ensured they continued to work towards the target of improving the quality of the workforce. Through the use of examples and illustration and reflective questioning they felt encouraged and enabled to find the tools and solutions to *‘move on’* rather than being told what to do. *‘She fed it back to us and boosted us and made us think that we... did know more than we thought’*. During the training the SS made everyone feel comfortable and specifically supported and encouraged the childminders and the PVI setting staff to work together with the EY team in both smaller and larger groups.

In terms of the added value of the PTP support the SS was felt to fill a resource gap because the EY team were all *‘brand new’* and did not have the skills and knowledge around working with childminders and the PVI sector. The EY manager said it was great to have the free training but it was the SS’s knowledge and tips for how to work with the childminders and PVI settings that was of most benefit. The SS felt it had been helpful for her to be a fresh pair of eyes – an outsider who could enable them to reflect on their practice in a non-threatening way. The SS referred to the PTP support as partnership working as she encouraged the EY team to think about how they were working with each other and with the EY sector as a whole. She modelled an approach to working effectively in partnership, acknowledging that she took her lead from the SS who initially scoped the assignment.

4.5 Impact

The new EY team made progress in working with childminders and the PVI sector following the PTP assignment. The team developed their knowledge of how other LAs support childminders and the PVI settings and this enabled them to develop their partnership working with all providers. Through this they have increased their skills, experience and knowledge of the groups they are supporting. The PEAL and *‘Listening as a way of life - An introduction to Listening’* training facilitated childminders’ understanding of the importance of early learning and working in partnership with parents to support positive outcomes for children. It also provided a platform for developing the quality of provision so as to motivate childminders to improve their practice.

- Whilst there is no way of linking the assignment and Ofsted ratings the LA lead felt the PTP support had helped to improve their performance. She said that when they started the assignment (January 2012) their Ofsted ratings for *‘good’* childminders was 56% which put them amongst the

bottom 10 LAs in the country for EY ratings. As of February 2013 their ratings of 'good' childminders had increased to 64% (the assignment finished in October 2012). During the same time frame the PVI sector ratings increased from 50% who were 'satisfactory' and 50% 'good' to 70% being 'good'.

- The LA team has increased their knowledge and confidence about what works to increase the motivation and quality of childminders and PVI settings. They have also increased their knowledge, understanding and confidence in encouraging quality improvement in all settings taking part in the two-year-old offer.
- Childminders and practitioners in PVI settings understand the importance of early learning to the achievement of all outcomes for young children. They have also increased their awareness of the specific needs of two-year-olds for ensuring quality provision. The LA lead for the assignment said that when the two-year-old offer was first raised childminders were not interested in applying for it as they thought it would involve minding children with child protection issues. Following the training and their discussions with the EY team both the SS and the LA lead felt they had started to appreciate the importance of Early Learning and were taking an interest in the two-year-old offer.
- Both the LA lead and the SS highlighted that by changing the ethos and improving the quality of the PVI sector they will eventually improve outcomes for children. This will be evidenced by the EYSFP results in the longer term.

4.6 Evidencing the outcomes

The Children's Centre and Childcare Service Manager and the SS provided the following evidence for the outcomes resulting from the PTP support:

- The EY team have gelled as a team. At the end of assignment review the EY team identified for themselves how much their confidence and communication skills to support their work with the childminders and PVI settings had improved. There was no longer an 'us and them' situation and they also recounted that PVI settings reported feeling supported. *'She gave us the confidence to develop the service'*. Previously they *'felt they had to do it'* whereas now *'they [are] enjoy doing it'* and they have built really good relationships with the childminders and the PVI settings. They now appreciate and understand the childminders and the PVI sector much more. The SS was identified as the catalyst to building these relationships.
- There is now a childminder network with meetings taking place with the LA every term. The childminders network developed as they built the relationships through the training and as they all started to realise the importance of meeting with each other and building an equal partnership approach. There is a good turnout at the network meetings and speakers actively volunteer to come and talk to the childminders about, for example, diet and building quality practice to meet the EYFS.

- The EY team has developed and improved a range of processes to ensure the smooth running of their sponsored childminders' scheme (provides support and funding to childminders who work with children with SEN).
- The links between the EY team and the PVI sector have developed resulting in much more regular contact and improved relationships with nurseries. The PVI sector meetings have developed more of a focus on continuous quality improvement of the service where as - previously they were concerned with money and funding.
- Some of the childminders have made the transition from just 'minding the kids' to being 'professional'. During the training they became more reflective in their practice and started to appreciate the circumstances and challenges for the 'working parents' they provide a service for. They now appreciate the importance of quality and are taking an interest in the EYFS. This was evidenced by their requests for support from the EY team to develop their practice; to prepare for the two-year-old offer, also to support the further development of their action plans which will enable them to listen to and observe young children in their care and to plan for their needs. They are now attending the childminder networks and taking an active part in the discussions around improving the quality of their practice.

5. Case Study 'D' – Parental Engagement

The fourth case study assignment sought to help encourage setting staff to engage parents in their children's early learning as part of the drive to improve quality in the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector. The case study is based on interviews with the Early Years (EY) Quality and Improvement Manager who led the assignment within the local authority (LA), the Sector Specialist (SS) who delivered the assignment and an Area Manager for a Nursery who took part in the training which was provided as part of the assignment. The assignment took around five months to complete – starting in February and finishing in June 2012.

5.1 Context

As part of the drive to improve quality in the PVI sector this LA sought Peer to Peer (PTP) Support to help encourage setting staff to engage parents in their children's early learning. They wanted to embed the practice of engaging with parents so as to develop more of a nursery 'community' with families in their LA. Underpinning this agenda was the extensive evidence demonstrating the importance of parental involvement in children's learning.

The LA previously bought in a series of PEAL training sessions to help build these skills with setting staff but had been disappointed with the impact that resulted. Whilst they saw some changes in settings where practitioners engaged with the training, there were other settings where it appeared to make no difference to the way they were communicating with parents. Compounding the situation was the high turnover of staff in the PVI sector as well as the tendency for setting staff to be rather young, inexperienced and lacking in confidence about engaging with parents.

5.2 Setting up and scoping the assignment

On hearing of the free offer from C4EO in early 2012 the EY Quality and Improvement Manager readily applied for the PTP support. She found the process of applying and setting up the support very straightforward. She submitted her request form and was then put in touch with a SS who initially contacted her by telephone. A scoping meeting between the LA lead, her colleagues and the SS was set up soon after (February 2012) to discuss their requirements. The LA was looking for training and follow up support to mentor settings in engaging with hard to reach families to enable them to support their children's learning. They particularly wanted to build the confidence of junior staff working with parents. They also wanted to specifically embed the practice of working with parents in five settings that they had not been able to engage in the past.

During the scoping session they discussed the options for achieving their goals. The LA appeared to be looking for the outcomes that PEAL could offer but due to their previous experience wanted to explore alternative training packages. Despite their reservations the SS believed that PEAL was the best option if offered flexibly to meet the needs of the LA with follow on support. In order to

avoid replicating their previous experience he proposed to tailor PEAL to the socio-demographic profile of parents in the LA. They also agreed to have an Action Learning Event to follow up the PEAL training which would help to embed the learning and practice within the settings.

The aims of the assignment were to increase confidence, skills, knowledge and capacity of a selection of EY settings to build relationships and work effectively with parents. The PEAL model was also to be used to enable settings to apply the learning to projects which engage parents and build relationships.

5.3 The Assignment

The assignment lasted 5 days in total and took around 5 months to complete – starting in February and finishing in June 2012. The timing of the PEAL workshops needed to fit into an existing programme of work with the settings and therefore needed to happen after April. C4EO agreed to carry the assignment over to the next financial year.

The assignment consisted of the following activities:

- **Setting up the assignment** – This involved conversations on the phone and email correspondence between the EY Quality and Improvement Manager and the SS to finalise the scope of the assignment and discuss the arrangements for the workshops. They also planned the coverage of the sessions and briefing material for participants coming on the training. The SS also tailored the PEAL training materials to ensure it was primarily focused on PVI settings. He tailored the training to more accurately reflect the profile of setting staff who would be attending. The PEAL training programme was divided between the main workshop and the Action Learning event.
- **Three separate PEAL training workshops** – Each workshop was delivered to different setting staff, their managers and the EY team. The training was mainly delivered through the PEAL materials with some adjustment to the scenarios used for the role play. The training was targeted at settings who proved difficult to engage in the past. At the end of the workshop they set an action plan which was then taken back to the setting to be discussed and implemented.
- **Action Learning Event** – The PEAL training was followed up with an Action Learning Event at the end of June where all the participants from the previous PEAL training sessions were invited back to discuss their progress. This was intended to operate as a networking session for PEAL participants to share the activities and projects they set up as part of their action plan following the initial PEAL training.

5.4 Challenges delivering the assignment

Despite the combined efforts of the EY team and the SS to consider how best to ensure good attendance at each of the workshops, the turnout was not as good as they hoped. They were expecting 15 or 16 participants at each of the PEAL sessions of which about ten turned up to the first session and about eight to the second and third sessions. All participants who attended a PEAL session were also invited to the final Action Learning Event but only about seven people turned up. The EY Quality and Improvement Manager made every effort to ensure the workshops would be easily accessible – they held the training on a Saturday (which private settings seem to prefer), used different venues around the LA, offered lunch and refreshments and also considered access and parking issues. The EY Quality and Improvement Manager also contacted people the day before the workshop to remind them about the training.

5.5 Reflections

The EY Quality and Improvement Manager viewed the assignment as both worthwhile and interesting. She appeared to have a very good working relationship with the SS and valued his commitment to the project and straightforward approach. She described him as 'professional', easy to get on with, knowledgeable, enthusiastic and passionate about his work. She found him willing to listen, both flexible and open to their ideas as well as helpfully enabling them to think through what they wanted. Although she had a very clear idea of what she wanted she appreciated having someone constructively challenge her thinking and being '*open to challenge*'. She praised his training skills – highlighting his communication, listening and interpersonal skills - and his ability to engage practitioners by pitching the course appropriately. His delivery style was '*great*' – '*very relaxed*' but at the same time he remained very focused and ensured they stayed on track during the day. Practitioners '*really seemed to enjoy it*'. The training provided practitioners with '*ways in*' to building relationships with parents through the use of role playing different scenarios. This enabled practitioners to really reflect on how they were engaging with parents and see things from their perspective.

An Area Manager of a large nursery was extremely positive about the PEAL training. She and four of her staff attended the PEAL workshop and the Action Learning Event. Although she was not sure what to expect she jumped at the chance because they found it difficult to encourage parents to take part in activities in their setting. She hoped they would get some ideas for how to engage parents and also to encourage their involvement in their children's home learning. Despite the fact that they often hold training sessions on a Saturday she said it took some work to cajole her staff to give up their Saturday at short notice - promising them a nice lunch and some time off to compensate.

She reflected that the training '*blew her mind*' – praising the way the SS engaged all the practitioners in the discussion and the role playing which '*actually made us really understand sometimes what the barriers were*' for parents. She said the SS was '*very good*' '*a great communicator*' and because he allowed a lot of interaction they were able to talk about what they were

doing and consider different scenarios where they '*had to put themselves in the shoes of the parents*'. This enabled her to appreciate that what they sometimes do as practitioners can have the effect of putting off parents from engaging. She also found it helpful to look at the cultural issues and barriers as her nursery catered for a very diverse community. At the end of the training they prepared an action plan which she took back to discuss with other staff at her nursery. The Action Learning Event had helpfully provided an opportunity for her to meet and to hear what other nurseries and practitioners were doing to engage parents. She also said that her colleague's initial reservations about giving up their Saturday to go on the training were dispelled and they were really pleased she had convinced them to attend.

Despite the success of the training the EY Quality and Improvement Manager was concerned that the workshops still felt rather too close to PEAL and therefore more of a generic type of training. She was hoping it would be more bespoke in nature and tailored to the practitioners who would be attending, so they could really explore the nature of their concerns and anxieties about building professional relationships with parents, and do more to work on building their confidence. She felt that with them being young practitioners this could sometimes make it difficult for them to create a professional relationship with parents because they might not have sufficient life skills or confidence to achieve this.

In view of this concern, she felt, with hindsight, that if they had been able to spread the assignment over a longer period of time then she and the SS could have reviewed the training after the first session. Having more time for reflection would have enabled them to adapt the course accordingly. She also felt that being able to spread the days over a longer period of time would have permitted a longer gap – as much as six months – between the PEAL sessions and the Action Learning Event. Her understanding was that C4EO needed to complete the assignment within a specified time limit which felt a bit rushed for her.

The SS reflected that having fewer participants was not in itself an issue as smaller groups provided more opportunity for individual discussion, personal involvement, reflection and role play. However, at the Action Learning Event, it limited the opportunity for sharing the projects that settings were engaged in following the PEAL training. On reflection, he thought it might have been helpful to run the first PEAL session with managers so as to ensure they appreciated the value of the training and the need to encourage their staff to attend.

5.6 Impact

The EY Quality and Improvement Manager said the training had an instant impact as it required practitioners to set up practical projects which helped them to embed the learning in their setting by, for example, inviting parents in and doing home visits. As a consequence setting staff were having more '*peripheral conversations with parents*'. Whilst she hoped that these would eventually help prepare the way for any difficult conversations they might need to have, such as when a child appears to have a developmental or a behaviour

issue, there was not any evidence to suggest this was happening. In circumstances where practitioners needed to broach these more difficult subjects with parents they were still relying on the LA Inclusion Team to help them discuss these issues.

In terms of fulfilling the specific objectives set for the assignment the EY Quality and Improvement Manager said there is a greater understanding around the need to involve parents and appreciation about how to do this. For those who attended the PEAL training and are still working in their setting (as they have a high turnover of staff) she thought the vast majority are now more confident about engaging parents. She said that in some of the settings practitioners have built such a good relationship with parents that they will now share things about family life that have nothing to do with the childcare, which suggests a really open relationship with the parent. She, however, acknowledged that this may be as much to do with settings engaging more with children's centres and being influenced by their agenda as it is due to the effect of the PEAL training. The practitioners from different settings who attended the Action Learning Event helpfully started to share learning and build relationships and the EY Quality and Improvement Manager thought that at least two of the settings were still in contact. Beyond this she said it was difficult to measure any longer term outcomes as they have no means of measuring how parents have benefited as a result of the increased engagement with the setting.

She concluded that the added value of the PTP support was the outside perspective that the SS brought. *'I think it is good for practitioners to hear the same messages from other people because they are always banging on about what they think is good practice but it is good for them to hear from someone outside'* – it reinforces the message and can turn the 'magic key'. *'It is not just the LA message it is the national [message] and it is [the] important to children message'*.

The Area Manager of the nursery said that as a result of the PEAL training they now try to engage parents in all their activities in the nursery. Specifically the training provided ideas for how to engage parents and get them more involved in their children's learning and day to day activities. Previously she said it was very difficult to encourage parents to help with their child's learning in the home because the only time they had a conversation with parents was when they were concerned about the child's development. The training helped them to see how to break down any barriers or reservations parents may have about helping their children. They managed to work through the barriers by building the every-day conversations with parents alongside organising social and other activities for parents.

5.7 Evidencing the outcomes

The EY Quality and Improvement Manager provided the following evidence for the outcomes resulting from the PTP support:

- Settings have established a communication wall or notice board – where both parents and staff communicate either in words, pictures or photos about a child's achievements. This helped one setting to realise that a particular child who never spoke English at the nursery was actually

learning the language as she was starting to speak the odd English word at home.

- Settings organising coffee type sessions with parents to build relationships.

The Area Manager for a Nursery EY Quality and Improvement Manager provided the following evidence for the outcomes resulting from the PTP support:

- Her nursery organised a pizza night for parents where they encouraged parents to engage in activities with each other in small groups. They also showed them video clips and offered practical tips of how to engage their children in learning at home, such as counting with their child when shopping. The pizza night also seemed to have helped the nursery increase their popularity and was attracting new parents who heard about the setting from other parents' recommendations.
- They were passing on the learning to parents from any training courses staff went on. So, for example, following a sign language training session setting staff shared the learning with parents via their monthly newsletter where they added the '*sign*' of the month for parents to practice with their child at home.
- Parents now want to know more about how their children are doing and how they can be more involved in their children's learning.
- It helped the staff see that there could be different reasons and barriers as to why parents do not seem to be interested in helping with their children's learning. *'For staff it has given them confidence about the different things they can do' and 'knowing that these are the things that they could do has given them more confidence they can achieve it...And it has built their relationships with the parent'.*

6. Case Study 'E' – Improving a Quality Assurance Scheme

The final case study assignment involved further developing a Quality Assurance Scheme and the networks and forums that would help to engage the sector with this across a local authority (LA). The case study is based on interviews with the Lead Officer who led the assignment within the LA, the Sector Specialist (SS) who delivered the assignment and a Manager (and owner) of a private nursery who took part in the training and subsequently mentored another setting manager. The assignment took just over 12 months to complete – starting in July 2011 and finishing in August 2012.

6.1 Context

As part of the drive to increase the quality in the private, voluntary and independent childcare sector (PVI) an improvement plan was set up in the LA. It involved restructuring their Children and Young Peoples Service, introducing a RAG rating system, rolling out their Quality Assurance (QA) scheme and the development of networks across the sector. They wanted to ensure that provision is judged as 'good' or to show an improvement at their Ofsted inspection. The impetus for the improvement work arose from the Children and Young People's Plan with the ultimate goal of improving outcomes for children.

The LA welcomed the offer of Peer to Peer Support (PTP) which they learnt about through a newsletter. The Lead Officer particularly valued external support for providing an objective focus for their small unitary LA where everyone knew each other. They initially approached C4EO to help support their work with Early Years Professionals (EYP) and childminders. They were keen to use the resource to build on their work boosting the confidence of their EYPs so as to enable them to embed their role more effectively within the sector.

6.2 Setting up and Scoping the Assignment

After completing the request form a meeting was set up with their SS who spent half a day talking through all the issues and scoping the assignment in the autumn of 2011. The Lead Officer found the process of applying very easy and straightforward.

The LA initially requested support for further developing their QA scheme and the networks and forums that would help to embed this practice across settings. After an initial scoping discussion with their SS it was agreed that the assignment would be divided into two distinct strands. The first strand involved developing the support network associated with their QA scheme and help with:

- Training mentors and assessors
- Developing staff skills in support areas
- Strengthening and wider roll out of their QA scheme
- Measuring the impact of the QA training

- Supporting the EY team following their recent restructure

The second strand was focused specifically on developing and supporting childminders' engagement with the QA scheme and networks. The intention was to draw on the EYP network to develop a pilot '*buddy scheme*' which would support childminders in each of the five localities in the LA. They were keen to encourage childminders to work more collaboratively and to appreciate the benefits of operating in a network so they could provide the best options for children. Inevitably there were some tensions between childminders who were effectively in competition for business.

The primary aim of the assignment was to:

- Improve the Ofsted outcomes across all settings
- Achieve better quality of provision for children
- Improve the levels of confidence amongst staff and empower them to implement the QA scheme and embed it into their practice
- Ensure continuity and consistency of practice across the EY sector by providing an integrated service.

During the scoping meeting they discussed the QA scheme – both the tools and the way they are used to measure quality of provision. They discussed the idea of mentoring and assessor training as they believed this would build confidence and skills that could be transferred to other situations where for example a practitioner might be challenging their practice, or to provide support and encouragement for others.

6.3 The Assignment

The assignment took just over 12 months to complete – starting in July 2011 and finishing in August 2012. The initial agreement was for a five day assignment but this was extended to 10 days when the assignment was divided into two strands.

The assignment consisted of the following activities:

- **An initial meeting** to prepare for and plan the support
- **An Action Learning Workshop** – At the start of the assignment the LA brought together the EY sector (but specifically targeting the EY team, EYPs and childminders) to explore their reactions to plans for further developing and wider roll out of the QA scheme and to consult with them about getting involved. They used their termly PVI sector update meeting for this purpose. During the workshop the SS talked about quality assurance in general and how mentoring and assessor training could support engagement with the QA scheme.
- **Attendance at two EYP Network meetings** – the EY team and the SS also consulted EYPs during their network meetings. The purpose of doing this was to assess their reaction to the proposed idea of asking EYPs to help roll out and embed the QA scheme. They also explored their views about the type of support they felt was needed to help achieve this – and specifically canvassed interest in attending the mentoring and assessor training. As the role of mentor and assessor was previously funded and

provided by the LA they promoted the initiative as personal development training which could provide potential career opportunities in the future. They were looking for five out of the 30 EYPs in the LA to sign up as a mentor and give up their time to support childminders in the area. The childminders who expressed an interest in the QA programme were also invited along to the meeting. Following both meetings the EY manager paired the five EYPs with a childminder.

- **Mentoring training workshop** – March 2012 - This was open to the EY team and EY settings. The training and support challenged people to consider their practice, explore what works and what needs to change to improve the quality of their practice.
- **Assessor training workshop** – March 2012 – The Mentoring workshop was swiftly followed by a training workshop for assessors, which was also open to the EY team and EY settings.
- **Action Learning Workshop** – At the end of the training they invited participants back to explore their reflections about the process and how well the mentoring scheme was working.
- **A PTP Buddying scheme for EYPs** – the remaining 5 days was used to set up an EYP buddying scheme. The idea was to provide a buddying service for provision that did not have an EYP or for childminders who were developing their own QA plan. Further mentoring workshops were delivered to support the buddies and the SS was also available to provide one to one support for the EYPs and the childminders.

6.4 Challenges delivering the assignment

Apart from it taking some time to book dates far enough ahead to give people sufficient notice of the training there appeared to be no issues with the assignment. The assignment completed on time and was felt to have gone well. The Lead Office and SS communicated easily, sharing regular email and telephone contacts and were both available when needed.

6.5 Reflections

The assignment was very well received by the LA and the EYP who took part in the training. The Lead Officer said it was very successful and useful as it enabled them to reflect on their practices and explore their motivations for this approach. The assignment kick started relationships across settings and enabled people to realise what could be achieved if they all worked together. The Lead Officer found the SS very easy to work with – being very personable and straightforward. She said she had complete confidence in the SS '*knowing that what she was delivering was going to have an impact*' as she could see this by the level of engagement of the practitioners.

The Lead Officer was impressed with the quality of the training highlighting that the SS was '*very effective*' and '*very thought provoking*'. She opened up some profound issues for people around being a good mentor and assessor and handled any issues really '*proactively and effectively*'. In doing this she enabled staff to reflect on their own practices and broadened their perspectives so they

could see the bigger picture. *'It gave confidence to people who really didn't have that confidence before they started the project'. 'She answered questions comprehensively' and was 'obviously an expert in that field' and was 'very competent in what she was doing'.* The SS was also praised for her friendly but professional approach and her strong interpersonal skills which helped to engage people effectively. She could see when someone was having difficulty understanding something and she would reemphasise a point or provide an opportunity for people to speak to her at the end of the training session. The Lead Officer felt that, on a few occasions, the SS was slightly too informal in her delivery but she put that down to regional variation and differences.

An owner manager of a private nursery found out about the PTP assignment through her EYP Network where she is an active member. She volunteered as she liked the idea of becoming a mentor and thought it would also be helpful for her own professional development. Whilst she strives for quality in her nursery she was aware that there are other settings that might benefit from support to improve the quality of their provision.

She said the SS was an *'excellent trainer'* being very animated and friendly in her delivery. She effectively maintained participants' engagement and attention and catered for their different learning styles. The content was *'spot on'* – as it was pitched at the right level for the audience. Also, she said the SS was very easy to work with, very approachable and a really good listener. It was very clear she knew what she was talking about as she very easily answered any questions and explained things really well. Testament to her skills in delivery was the way the learning was imprinted in the nursery manager's mind when she subsequently engaged with her mentee.

6.6 Impact

It was a really positive experience from the LA perspective. I think the sector engaged really well. I think it helped us to develop the relationship with the sector we are involved with. It has empowered our childminders to form really positive and sound networks. It has empowered our EYPs to take on the running and facilitation and organisation of their own network. And I'm looking forward to a really positive future with the sector in whatever capacity the LA ends up working.

Lead Officer

At the end of the assignment the Lead Officer reflected on the way it helped them focus on and develop partnerships across the sector. She said the EYPs have been empowered to be more proactive (e.g. in asking to run their network themselves) and they have continued to offer PTP support particularly for leaders and managers of settings. In addition there is now a deeper cross sector understanding between practitioners about their work. The SS said the QA scheme was being used at all levels to support the development of quality practice. It is influencing the processes used by LA staff and settings and therefore influencing front line delivery and outcomes for families. She felt the assignment also developed staff skills and confidence which will support the continuation of these improvements.

At the time of the interview (about six months after the assignment ended) the Lead Officer reflected that the positive impacts on the sector were continuing. Through building trust, engagement and changing attitudes the assignment helped to build positive relationships across settings and with the EY team. As a consequence they were developing stronger networks and forums between the LA teams, childminders, EYPs and Children's Centres.

The assignment gave practitioners an understanding of how to explore and reflect on quality and '*gave them avenues for the discussion*' sorting out the practice issues it '*developed the ethos of sharing*' information. The Lead Officer said they now have some very strong childminders who are very confident in what they are doing and prepared for inspection. They have '*confidence*' and '*professional pride*' that what they do is valuable and valued and they are making a significant contribution to the lives of the children they are looking after.

The Lead Officer reported that the childminder outcomes at both the first and repeat Ofsted inspection improved by 8%. Whilst she said that it is impossible to isolate the effect of the PTP support from other initiatives it will inevitably have contributed to this positive result. By helping to secure and embed practice it will have improved the outcomes for children and given practitioners the confidence and skills to identify and work to improve the quality across the sector and ultimately improve outcomes.

6.7 Evidenced outcomes

The Lead Officer and the manager of a private nursery in the LA provided the following evidence for the outcomes resulting from the PTP support:

- It laid the foundations for building relationships and developing networks to help support quality practice across the sector.
- It enabled EYPs to appreciate the professional way in which childminders operate in the LA.
- It empowered the EYPs to be more proactive and to rely less on the EY team to drive their agenda. In January 2013 the EYPs asked to run their network themselves.
- There has been a wider take up of the QA scheme because staff feel more confident about promoting it.
- Practitioners felt more confident about mentoring and assessing others.
- It encouraged childminders to use local children's centres.
- In recognition of the value placed on the initiative EYPs were continuing to provide their buddying support.
- The LA is now employing childminders in each locality to offer peer support. They have six childminders rated 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted who facilitate sessions in a children's centre for all childminders in that locality.

- Childminders are now proactively contacting EY officers for support with their practice and they are more open to them visiting them in their homes than previously.
- The manager of the setting used the training to help her mentee with leadership and staff management skills and encouraged her to build a relationship with the EY team in the LA. She said that the training enabled her to operate more effectively with her staff and her family – being more understanding, taking a more reflective and considered approach and managing situations to produce the desired outcome. This for example has helped in the way she supervises her staff, and in supporting her children at home.

7. Role and value of PTP Support

The Early Years Peer to Peer (PTP) Support Programme, funded by the DfE, was launched in April 2011 to provide a package of tailored support to address issues of quality in the early years (EY) sector. It was set up for two years by the Early Childhood Unit (ECU) at NCB in partnership with the Centre for Excellence and Outcomes (C4EO) and was designed to improve outcomes for young children and their families. The package of support was delivered by a team of early years sector specialists (SS) to local authorities (LAs). Since the programme was launched a total of 80 assignments have been undertaken.

This report has documented five case studies showing how LAs used the PTP support and any impacts it was perceived to have. In this final chapter we draw together some of the key messages across these five examples and reflect on the value and role of PTP Support (Section 7.2). Based on this evidence we have identified what appear to be the key elements that are critical to ensuring a successful assignment (Section 7.3). We end by reflecting on how to maximise the impact of the PTP programme drawing on the advice and suggestions proposed by participants for changing and improving it (Section 7.4).

In order to set the broader context for the chapter we begin (Section 7.1) by reporting on assessments about the efficacy of assignments. This draws on quantitative data from feedback forms, distributed by C4EO immediately after the end of each assignment, and further feedback from an online survey, circulated approximately one month later.

7.1 Effectiveness of the assignments

In the feedback form respondents were asked to rate the effectiveness of their assignments, in relation to the criteria listed in Table 1. Average ratings were high; on the 1-5 scale, where 5 indicated complete effectiveness, all but one was above 4.5. The lowest rating, which was still high at 4.3, concerned whether the support was delivered as planned at the start of the contract.

Table 1. LA ratings of assignments (where 1 is 'not at all' and 5 'completely')

	Mean	Min	Max	N
How far the support was delivered as planned at the start	4.3	3	5	27
How far the support achieved assignment outcomes	4.6	4	5	27
How far the tailored support was successful overall	4.7	3	5	27
How effectively the Sector Specialist worked with the LA	4.8	4	5	27
How far the Sector Specialist met LA requirements	4.7	4	5	24

7.1.1 Impact on recipient organisations

In the feedback form respondents were asked to rate four aspects of their own effectiveness in the area covered by their assignment, before and after they received support from the SS. Effectiveness was rated on a five-point scale,

where 1 was 'not effective' and 5 'very effective'. As shown in Table 2 below, in all four respects, respondents rated their effectiveness as significantly higher after delivery of the assignment.

Table 2. Recipients' ratings of their effectiveness before and after assignments

	Before the assignment (Mean)	After the assignment (Mean)	N
Skills and expertise	3.4	4.4*	26
Knowing 'what works' / evidence of good practice	3.4	4.4*	27
Capacity to make improvements required	3.6	4.5*	26
Confidence	3.3	4.4*	27

*Means differed significantly at $p < .001$

Asked at the conclusion of their assignments whether the work undertaken would effect change or influence local practice, two thirds (18 respondents) said this was very likely, and the remaining third quite likely. Of 27 respondents, more than two-thirds anticipated effects in relation to strategy, processes, front-line delivery, partnership working and outcomes for children and young people. Slightly fewer expected the assignments to affect governance issues (10) or user involvement (14).

7.1.2 Effectiveness of the support provided

Reinforcing the positive picture painted by the end of the assignment feedback form data, all but one of the 15 respondents who took part in the on line survey said that their SS had met their requirements overall, and that their skills and expertise matched their needs. The majority - nine of 15 respondents - described the support they received as 'very useful'; while five found it 'quite useful'. Just one respondent had not found their assignment useful, explaining that, with regard to the area of interest, their own staff had as much expertise as the allocated specialist.

One other respondent - who was otherwise happy with their assignment - also indicated that a policy review had not been very successful. However, this was attributed to their own organisation having insufficient time and resources to devote to the task.

7.1.3 Impact of the assignments

With the exception of one person who was disappointed with their assignment, survey respondents stated that the PTP support had successfully contributed to their work, helping them to achieve one or more of the outcomes listed below. Each was mentioned by at least six people.

- Improved leadership for the service
- Better delivery of front line services
- Improved knowledge of specific areas of practice
- Better understanding of research/policy on 'what works'
- Better strategies/policies/procedures for the service

- Better measurement of the impact of practice
- Better understanding of the revised Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)
- More effective engagement of parents in their children's early learning
- Identification of areas of emerging or excellent practice
- Identification of areas to be addressed to improve quality of provision/ outcomes for children.

Given the opportunity to make additional comments about their experiences, a small number of respondents did so. Typically, these reinforced previous positive ratings of the support provided:

I found the support from the Early Years PTP Support Programme extremely helpful and found the sector support specialist very supportive.

It was very useful that the PTP support we received was from someone with an extremely wide knowledge across many areas of EY practice. She was able to understand immediately the thinking behind the project and recognise the commitment of the team to continually updating and developing the programme in line with new initiatives and developments in EY and the commitment to addressing local needs, and LA priorities.

We found the programme very useful in assisting us to progress, support and develop services on our quality improvement journey. It helped us to identify, focus and direct services in the areas of most need.

7.2 Views about the value and role of PTP Support

Rather unsurprisingly, LAs who took part in the case studies were effusive about the offer of 'free' specialist support and particularly welcomed the resource in the current financial climate. As the case studies have evidenced the PTP support was valued for enabling LAs to:

- Build an early years strategy
- Improve the quality and practice of their PVI sector
- Support stronger networking and multi-agency partnerships
- To work in an a more evidence based way
- To encourage parents' involvement in their child's learning
- To improve a QA scheme and develop the networks and support required to embed this across the sector.

The added value of PTP support was described as the provision of a dedicated expert resource, with an 'outside' perspective, who is able to share their experience and knowledge of working in other LAs, and to be a catalyst for change or to facilitate the delivery of a project.

If you genuinely want to change what you do and the way you work you couldn't have anything better because you have got a sounding board you have got somebody who can bring a huge amount of expertise and help you think through those issues that you really can bring about change.

EY Manager, LA

LAs believed that without the PTP support they might not have achieved their desired goal or outcome at all, in the case of being trained, or they would not have achieved it so quickly, or so effectively. *'We almost certainly wouldn't have a strategy with all the people involved'*. In these circumstances the support helped to speed up processes enabling them to save time and remain focused. The NCB/C4EO brand was also felt to have given their project or assignment credibility and respect which served to attract the participation of stakeholders and a willingness to engage and work together. Where the SS was delivering a training programme then they were viewed as contributing a specific expertise and skill that the LA could not have met.

The degree to which LAs would have managed without the support depended on their context and infrastructure. Understandably a completely new EY team setting up following a recent restructure viewed the resource rather differently to an established and very experienced EY team. That said, even those operating in an established team appreciated the outside perspective and the dedicated specialist resource. Beyond estimating the cost of buying in the SS time they found it hard to put a price on the value of the support and the amount saved as a result.

7.3 The critical elements

Despite the variation in the nature of the case study assignments, it was clear from the interviews that there are a number of elements that are critical to the successful delivery of PTP support, these are discussed below.

7.3.1 Laying the foundations

It was clear from the case studies that the success of an assignment crucially depends on the degree to which there is a clear rationale and focus for the project and the level of commitment of all involved. For this reason, it seems important to invest time to lay the groundwork and build the relationships so that the assignment can grow from firm and strong foundations. This is particularly important in situations where LAs may be lacking in focus and direction. Key to this initial phase is the need for:

- **Clarity of aims, focus, direction and outcome** – Not surprisingly the importance of having a clear brief and focus was highlighted as being critical for navigating the assignment and delivering on its objectives. A clear focus prevented assignments becoming derailed or losing direction. It also ensured the potential for a more successful outcome. It is inevitable that some LAs may be inclined to reach out for a free resource without having first identified a clear aim and focus. In these circumstances it is incumbent upon the SS to help them clarify and refine the brief so that it is clear to all involved.
- **An LA champion** (as the case studies were all based in a LA) – this is the person who will lead and drive the assignment working closely with the SS from the beginning to end. Having someone who can coordinate and oversee the assignment is absolutely crucial to it achieving success. Ideally they will be operating at a sufficiently senior strategic position to ensure they can secure the participation and commitment at both the

strategic and operational levels. It was evident that the assignments that were led by a particularly committed, charismatic or a respected individual resulted in greater engagement and lasting buy in from across the sector.

- **The importance of carrying out a thorough scoping session** – is crucial to the success of the assignment and really helps both sides to focus on what they are trying to achieve. It helps to develop a real understanding of what is driving the assignment and what the organisation or LA wants to achieve. It also provides an opportunity to assess the level of buy in from the team and their management peers and how any internal conflicts may play out during the assignment. Ss highlighted the importance of carrying out scoping meetings in person as this provides the opportunity to meet all the key individuals and observe the way they work together. This enabled them to understand the context and dynamics between the different parties and to investigate whether there are any competing priorities and interests that might affect the assignment. Where the LA lacks direction in focus and leadership there is a need to allow sufficient time to ensure an assignment is thoroughly scoped. It may also require the SS to adopt a slightly more proactive approach to the conversation and even to constructively challenge the LA in order to help them develop a realistic brief.
- **Setting a clear and realistic plan** – Building on the scoping session and the development of the brief is the need to set a concrete plan of action which will be feasible to deliver and result in the agreed outcomes.
- **A shared commitment and ethos** – Underpinning the ease with which the SS was able to work with the EY team and the sector was both their desire for help and support, and a willingness to be open to change. The need to build this commitment to the project from the outset is essential as assignments could be undermined by an unwillingness to engage by any of the professionals involved.
- **The need to ensure joint ownership between the LA and the settings involved** – related to the shared commitment is the sense of joint ownership of the assignment or a shared endeavour. This will also be critical to ensuring that the project will have a lasting legacy and that the resulting practice or learning can be embedded. Taking the time to consult and involve settings in decisions about the shape of an assignment such as through a workshop or event clearly paid dividends in building the shared endeavour necessary for success.

7.3.2 Finding the right person for the job

The success of case study assignments was also crucially dependent on finding the right SS for the job. The glowing praise that EY leads and managers showered on their SS illustrated how well this worked when they were 'perfectly suited' or matched to the assignment. All participants highlighted the importance of SS's personal qualities, their level of experience, their track record of working with LAs and effecting change, their ability to understand and empathise, their extensive knowledge of the sector and the evidence base. Alongside all of these aptitudes was the need for them to have excellent relationship management skills so they can build relationships very quickly.

This also helped them navigate their way around any politics and awkward situations that they may encounter.

I think what's always critical to the success of any assignment is relationships. I see that as absolutely key. I think it's about building relationships with key partners and then rolling out whatever the assignment is to a high quality standard.

Sector Specialist

The combined effect of these different qualities was felt to contribute to the credibility, confidence and trust that they need to be able to deliver the assignment and mobilise stakeholders.

7.3.3 Delivering the assignment

The success in delivering the case study assignments appeared to revolve around the following elements:

- **The importance of maintaining a good working relationship** between the lead in the LA and the SS was reported in all the case studies. Whilst both sides were required to manage the assignment from their own perspective the onus is primarily on the SS to ensure an assignment stays on track. As the LA leads typically have to juggle the assignment alongside a very large and pressurised workload it is likely that the SS may need to actively encourage and nudge the LA or organisation to maintain progress. Cautionary advice was also offered by a LA about the need for a SS to respect the brief and operate within the remit specified by the LA and not deviate into other areas that they may be familiar with. This may be harder for SSs who have previously worked with the LA or organisation and may know the individuals involved.
- **Maintaining the engagement and buy in of the key stakeholders** – was also critical to the successful delivery of the assignments. This was principally dependent on the LA champion's ability to bring different professional groups together and maintain their interest. Assignments could quite easily be undermined by a poor turnout to an event. Where simple practical steps were taken to think about how best to maximise participation then this really helped to encourage the level of engagement.
- **The quality of the SS's facilitation skills** was also highlighted as being critical to the success of the assignments. This is clearly needed throughout the process but particularly for the delivery of training sessions and workshops where a range of professional groups are being brought together each having their own aims and agenda.
- **A flexible approach** to delivering the assignment - The importance of being able to design and tailor assignments to their specific focus (rather than sticking with a set number of days per assignment) was a key element highlighted by SSs. It was also felt that the number of days and the nature and duration of the PTP support should be open to review as the assignment progresses.
- A final and lasting way to ensure success is by **building a stage in the process which enables the LA to embed the learning**. This was often

achieved through some kind of Action learning event or workshop which provided the opportunity for reflection about how the outcome of the assignment can be sustained in the longer term or learning or practice applied to other settings.

7.4 Maximising Impact

We end the report by reflecting on how to maximise the impact of the PTP programme drawing on the advice and suggestions proposed by participants for changing and improving it. These build upon their comments and reflections about the PTP model and the elements that they felt were critical to its success. As these reflections are based on the specific experience of a limited number of assignments, we have contextualised some of these comments where the ECU have subsequently developed or changed their practice. These were broadly concerned with the need to do more to support the infrastructure around the delivery of the assignment and ways to modify or adapt the PTP model and its practical application:

7.3.1 Feedback, support and evaluation

A number of suggestions were made for how the ECU and C4EO could do more to support SSs delivering the assignment and ensure the support provided is fit for purpose. These included:

- **The provision of more on-going support for SSs** who sometimes felt like they were operating in isolation. Various suggestions were raised for ECU/C4EO to help with this including the organisation of more development days for SS to meet and share practice and the possible creation of a 'buddy' system. One potential idea raised by a SS was for two people to work on an assignment - one who leads and delivers the assignment and the other who provides a sounding board for the lead SS. The ECU confirmed that this has happened on a number of assignments when appropriate and when the budget allows.

SSs also felt there might be scope for the ECU to be more involved in the management of assignments – so they could provide continuity after a SS has completed an assignment. This would help to ensure that it is not just the SS who is seen as the public face of PTP Support. To an extent this was felt to be starting to happen and SSs particularly valued the assignments where the ECU played an active role helping them to lay the ground work more effectively at the scoping stage.

Related to the discussion about support was the suggestion that it might be helpful to clarify and review the role of regional associates (RAs)¹² and how they fit into the PTP Support programme.

¹² C4EO appointed three regional associates to support SSs, to quality assure the way assignments were scoped, assess progress as well as sharing information about activities taking place in other regions to further support the work.

- **Evaluating what works** – SSs want to make sure that the bespoke packages of support they developed and delivered, and which built on evidence based practices (e.g. OBA, PEAL and TTC) are proven to work. At the time of writing the report the ECU were in the process of evaluating the adaptations of the packages of support.
- **Capturing and sharing the learning** – SSs have now amassed a bank of tools, resources and materials from their assignments and it was suggested that it would be helpful for ECU and C4EO to capture and share this learning with SSs.
- **Embedding evaluation and feedback within assignments** to help SSs assess the impact they are making. It was suggested that additional time and resources could be provided to ensure that an evaluation plan was embedded in the assignment. This could result in a short summary outlining the nature of the assignment, the actions taken, how well it worked, reflect on the impact and learning and make suggestions for improvements. Whilst the review sessions carried out at the end of assignments are set up for this purpose, they may need to be tailored more to provide feedback to SSs.

A related suggestion concerned the feasibility of being able to identify longer term outcomes when completing the scoping form and the lack of any mechanism or follow up contact with a LA to track their progress. It was therefore suggested that if longer term outcomes are required then it might be more useful to set these outcomes part way through the assignment, or even at the end of an assignment as part of a Review Workshop or Action Learning Event.

7.3.2 The design and delivery of the PTP Support Programme

The final set of suggestions related to aspects of the design and delivery of the PTP support:

- **Review the marketing of PTP Support** and consider how it could be promoted more effectively. There were two linked issues of concern. The first was that the name of the PTP Support was felt to be confusing and potentially misleading for LAs as it was acknowledged that SSs were not always operating as a peer (i.e. another LA lead officer), but rather as a consultant drawn from ECU networks and from across the EY sector.
- The second suggestion concerned providing short pen portraits or 200 word illustrations or testimonials showing how PTP support can help. This was suggested as a way of avoiding any confusion about the name and also to help LAs to develop a clear brief in their request form. The ECU provided summaries as part of the promotional material in Year 2 which suggests that they may need to consider other ways to raise awareness of this material. Going forward the case study evidence can be used to contribute to an evidence bank of possible options showing how PTP support works and what difference it can make.

- **Separate the time allocation for scoping and delivering the assignment.** This would ensure that any additional time spent scoping an assignment would not detract from the delivery time. In circumstances where the request is vague more time could then be devoted to supporting the LA to develop the focus and purpose of the assignment.
- **Build in more time for reflection and review between SS and LA during an assignment** – It was suggested by a LA lead that it would help to incorporate a dedicated reflection meeting after first stage of assignment and ensure there is always some kind of action learning event at the end of the assignment. As the PTP support is a tailored consultancy and therefore allows flexibility within the timescale this option may need to be offered as part of the scoping meeting so it is clear to the participating LA or other EY provider.

Appendix A – The Online Survey

Appendix B – Topic Guides

Peer-to-peer support programme

Case Study telephone interview topic guide: Local Authority/ other Early Years providers

Cover sheet

At the start of the interview

- Introduce yourself and NCB: the Early Childhood Unit and C4EO run the DfE funded peer-to-peer support programme. They have commissioned the NCB Research Centre to evaluate the delivery and impact of the programme.
- Thank them for agreeing to be interviewed
- Explain that purpose of interviews to explore their longer term reflections of the peer to peer support and impact it has made on them.
- Remind them their participation is voluntary - do not have to answer questions they do not want to
- Permission to record interview, explain about confidentiality and anonymity, as applicable to this interview, including any limitations (when we publish our evaluation report, after the end of the programme in March 2013, we will not use people's names, or names of their organisations).
- Restate how long the interview will take (approximately 45 minutes – one hour max)
- Check if they have any questions before we start

Topic guide key:

'Organisation' (shorthand for 'other Early Years provider')

'LA' (local authority)

Background/ context (5 - 10 minutes)

Firstly we would like to find out more about you - and what your organisation was hoping to get out of involvement with the peer-to-peer support programme.

- Can they briefly describe their role and the organisation they work for
- What was their specific role in relation to peer to peer support
- How their LA become involved in the peer-to-peer support programme, and why their organisation chose to do so
 - When did they first hear about the peer-to-peer support programme
 - How did they hear about the programme
 - Who were they first in touch with/applied to (e.g. Early Childhood Unit at NCB or C4EO)
 - Had they any **other** experience of working with either ECU or C4EO, either before you received this particular peer-to-peer support, or afterwards?
 - If yes, nature of previous contact/support received
 - What prompted their LA/organisation to become involved in the programme (e.g. had they already identified an area/need they wanted to address; were they attracted to the programme because it was free; other reasons)
 - What were they looking for from the peer-to-peer support

A. The peer-to-peer support programme experience (15- 20 minutes)

We would now like to hear more about your experience of the peer-to-peer support programme and the tailored support you received from a sector specialist.

Application and scoping stage

- What kind of tailored support did the LA/organisation apply for initially
- How did this compare with what was actually scoped and agreed with the sector specialist; in what way did it change and reasons for any changes (e.g. not feasible within timeframes, discussion with sector specialist highlighted new priorities LA/organisation wished to focus on etc.)
- How easy was it to apply for the peer to peer support; nature of any difficulties or issues with the process (e.g any delays)
- How were any issues overcome

Overview of the tailored support scoped:

- Clarify, briefly, and seek further details of specified elements of support:
- How was it delivered; number of days and what form did the support take; what did the support from the sector specialist consist of (e.g. telephone advice, running workshops, delivering training, attending meetings etc.)

Views about the quality of the tailored support that was provided

- How well was their assignment delivered; nature of any issues which arose during the assignment in terms of e.g.
 - the actual delivery of support
 - the content/nature of support received
 - frequency of communication with sector specialist
 - any other issue(s)
- How were any issue(s) overcome
- How easy was the sector specialist to work with – any issues arising and how overcome
- How would they describe the quality of the support that was delivered; what was good/less good about this
- What specific qualities did the sector specialist bring to the assignment e.g. skills, knowledge of particular area etc.
- How well did the sector specialist's skills and expertise match their services needs
- With hindsight, what did the sector support contribute to their LA; how far did they have these skills within their organisation (did the sector support fill a resource gap e.g. LA/organisation had the people with the right skills/expertise but did not have the time to inform the work or prepare in the way the sector specialists did)

B. Reflections on the impact of the peer-to-peer support programme (15 - 20 minutes)

*In the final part of the interview, we would like to find out the extent to which the support received met your expectations, the degree to which the support received has supported you to make progress towards improving quality/outcomes for children/families; and any suggestions you may have for improvements to the programme.
Thinking about your own/your organisations overall experience of the programme...*

- How useful did they find the support; in what way was it useful/not useful; can they give some examples
- How well did the sector specialist meet their requirements; in what way did he or she meet/not meet their expectations
- What prevented the support from meeting their expectations; how could these issues have been resolved
- Did they or their colleagues review or **evaluate** the support in any way

- What has changed as a result of the assignment (or is planned to change in the coming months)?
- Can they provide any **examples** of how the LA/organisation was able to make progress towards improving their outcomes (relating to their targeted support and broader LA level outcomes); who benefitted, or is likely to (e.g. children and families; How)
 - Probe for examples and reasons for successful progress to outcomes
 - Probe for examples and reasons for lack of progress towards outcomes.
- How far has the targeted support provided by the sector specialist responsible for these outcomes; what other factors contributed to the resulting outcomes
- What if anything limited the degree to which the targeted support made a difference to the outcomes
- What do they think would have happened without sector support e.g. do they think the LA/organisation would have made the same progress towards outcome(s) and why

C. Reflections on the peer to peer model of working (10 minutes)

- What do you see as being key to the success of the model of peer-to-peer support
 - What has worked and why?
- What has not worked so well in terms of the delivery or content of the peer to peer support provided
 - What were the issues (were they resolved at the time)?
 - How could they have been resolved?
- What if any suggestions do you have for how the peer-to-peer support programme could be improved
- If you were starting again now what if any differences would you make to how you planned, designed and delivered the peer to peer support programme
- What else might you have done differently
- What advice would you give to other LAs/organisations and sector specialists to encourage the maximum benefit from the peer to peer programme
- What advice would you give to the NCB/DfE
- Would you recommend participation in the peer-to-peer support programme to other LAs/organisations
 - If yes, why; what benefits would it bring to other LAs/organisations

- If no, why not; what would need to change to make the programme better
- Any learning for other assignments in the future?
- On reflection, if you had to pay for the support received, would you have still sought support from the programme – why
 - Do you have any sense of the ‘value’ of the peer support you have received e.g. how much money do you think you have ‘saved’ as a result of having this free support
- Anything else you would like to say about the peer-to-peer support programme or the support received

Close of interview

- Any questions for the researcher?
- Remind interviewee about what will happen next/how the research findings will be used
- Thanks and close