Better Start Bradford Innovation Hub

I CAN
End of Contract Report - February 2021

This is a report provided by the Better Start Bradford Innovation Hub (BSBIH) for the Better Start Bradford (BSB) and the I CAN team. The document provides an overview of I CAN, its performance and findings from the implementation evaluation for the project's first contract period. The design of this evaluation is described in more detail in the Evaluation Plan Summary, which was approved by key stakeholders from the BSBIH and BSB.

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Produced for Better Start Bradford

Executive Summary

Project Summary

I CAN Early Talk 0-5 Working with Under 3s (WWU3), Working with Parents (WWP), and Setting Accreditation is a package of practitioner training that is part of Better Start Bradford's Loving Language theme. The training was adapted from the communication charity I CAN's original Early Talk training modules, and is delivered to practitioners in settings providing childcare and early education. The aim of the training is to provide information and guidance to practitioners on the importance of early language skills, how to support them, and how to identify children in need of additional support. Additionally, the accreditation scheme allows settings to demonstrate their commitment to supporting young children's early language development.

This report summarises the BSBIH's evaluation of the implementation of the I CAN project. The report is based upon data collected by the project provider, BHT Early Education and Training, over the first two and a half years of delivery - 1st July 2018 to 30th January 2021. It should be noted that due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the delivery of face to face training and accreditation visits had to be paused on 17th March 2020 in line with Government guidance. However, due to the nature of the project and the intention to provide all training and accreditation within a single contract period, the targets were not adjusted despite the need to change project delivery. The challenges faced by the provider in gaining access to settings in a very challenging time for the education sector should be taken into account in the interpretation of this report.

Project performance

Data

The project has worked closely with the Innovation Hub to improve the quality and completeness of project monitoring data. The project is in AMBER for this progression criteria.

Implementation

64%

Annual implementation targets related to the number of settings attending WWU3 and WWP training, with a target of 36 settings. The project trained 23 settings, putting it in RED for this progression criteria.

Completion

19%

Annual completion targets related to the number of settings achieving accreditation, with a target of 36 settings. Five settings have received accreditation, putting the project in RED for this progression criteria.

Satisfaction

100%

Annual satisfaction targets related to proportion of participants giving a median satisfaction score of 4+, with a target of 80%. All respondents (100%) had a score of 4+, putting the project is in GREEN for this progression criteria.

Recommendation 1 -

Consider extending the project in order to allow the remaining settings to receive the training and complete the accreditation process. Any extension should take into account the ongoing disruption to early education and care settings due to Covid-19, and ensure mitigating strategies are in place to allow for training/accreditation to happen despite these challenges.

Recommendation 2 -

Need for support for children's early language and communication is likely to increase as a result of closures to early education and care settings due to Covid-19. Consider whether there is scope within this project to offer a mentoring or ongoing support role to settings to help them provide good quality language provision in the face of increased need, particularly through the use of the WellComm toolkits received as part of this project.

*See Appendix (Page 10) for progression criteria cut-offs

Project Performance

Data

The project has worked closely with the Innovation Hub to improve the quality and completeness of project monitoring data. Overall, the data was submitted in line with the data requirements, however there were a small number of data quality issues relating to discrepancies in information about settings and duplication of records.

Implementation

64%

The annual implementation target related to the number of settings attending WWU3 and WWP training. The project had a target to provide training to all 36 early education and childcare settings within the Better Start Bradford reach area within the first two years of the contract, with 18 settings receiving training each year. After two and half years of the contract, the project has managed to train 23 of the settings, which represents 64% of the total target.

Prior to the first lockdown, 21 settings had received the training, suggesting that at that point they had completed 67% of their adjusted target for the contract at that time.

Completion

19%

The completion target for the project related to the number of settings to receive the Setting Accreditation. The target was for all the settings to complete the accreditation over the course of the contract, 18 within the second year and the final 18 within the last year, although this is adjusted to 9 for this report in order to allow for the final 6 months of the contract. At this point, the project has managed to support 5 settings to receive accreditation, which represents 19% of the 27 setting target. In addition to this, all 23 trained settings have started the accreditation process, and 11 have submitted accreditation portfolios. However, due to Covid-19, the project has been unable to carry out the accreditation visits.
As the targets for the Setting Accreditation were for them all to be completed in the second and third year, and there were only approximately 9 months of this prior to their first lockdown, this contract target was significantly impacted by the Covid-19 situation.

Satisfaction

100% * of participants gave a median score of 4+

The target for satisfaction was for 80% of the practitioners who responded to the satisfaction questionnaire to report a median total satisfaction score of 4 or more. In fact, 100% of respondents had a median satisfaction score of 4 or more, suggesting that respondents were uniformly pleased with the training.
*However, it is important to note that only 34 satisfactions questionnaires were returned, which represents only 16% of the practitioners who received the training. As such, these results should be considered cautiously, as it is unclear whether this data is representation of the whole sample.

Recruitment

Who were the beneficiaries of the project?

208 Staff trained

87% of staff trained

953 children attended settings that received the training

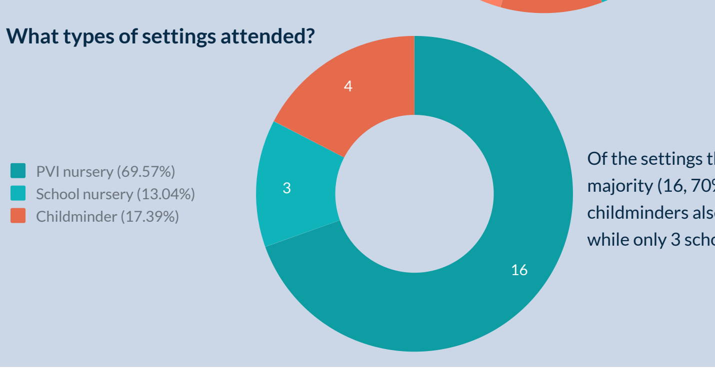
The immediate beneficiaries for this project were the practitioners who received the training. In total, 208 staff have received the training at this point.

On average, 87% of the staff employed in the settings at the time of the training received the training. In addition, some settings invited additional staff from other areas of the organisation to attend the training, which accounted for 24 of the total number of practitioners trained.

However, the ultimate beneficiaries of this project were the children attending the settings that received the training. In total, 953 children were attending these settings at the time they took part in the training.

What were the characteristics of the staff and settings attending the training?

Who were the staff that attended?



The practitioners who participated in the training were from a range of backgrounds. The largest proportion were Early Years Practitioners (28%), followed by Nursery Practitioners or Nurses (16%) and Nursery Managers or Deputy Managers (9%). There were smaller numbers of students or apprentices, support workers, room leaders, teachers, assistants, and heads or leads of early years. Finally, some practitioners did not disclose their credentials (10%) or their titles were withheld to protect anonymity (14%).

What types of settings attended?

Of the settings that participated in the training, the majority (16, 70%) were PVI settings. Four childminders also participated in the training (17%), while only 3 school nurseries received the training.

Practitioners' experience of the WellComm

How did practitioners experience the WellComm outcome assessment?

At the beginning of the project, the WellComm measure was identified as a promising outcome measure to consider the impact of the I CAN training on children's language skills. The WellComm is an assessment designed for use by early years practitioners to assess children's early language and communication, and is widely used in the sector.
At the second annual review of the project, it became clear that settings were not collecting the WellComm data in the way that was hoped. In order to understand what challenges the settings faced in collecting this data, the Innovation Hub created a questionnaire about their experiences with the WellComm. The person who arranged the I CAN training at each setting was asked to respond to the questionnaire, and their responses suggested the following:

On a positive note...

90% (9 respondents) of practitioners agree or strongly agree that...

- ...the time children spend in their setting has a big impact on their language skills
- ...the training they received on how to use the WellComm met their needs
- ...their staff felt confident using the WellComm to assess children's language skills
- ...the WellComm was an appropriate tool to use with the children in their setting

80% of respondents said they had used the Big Book of Ideas to support children's language development in our setting

70% (7 respondents)

- ...that the WellComm assessments contributed to their understanding of children's language skills over and above the EYFS assessments
- ... that the WellComm was easy to administer.

100% (10 respondents)

- ...that they make supporting children's language development a priority in their setting

However...

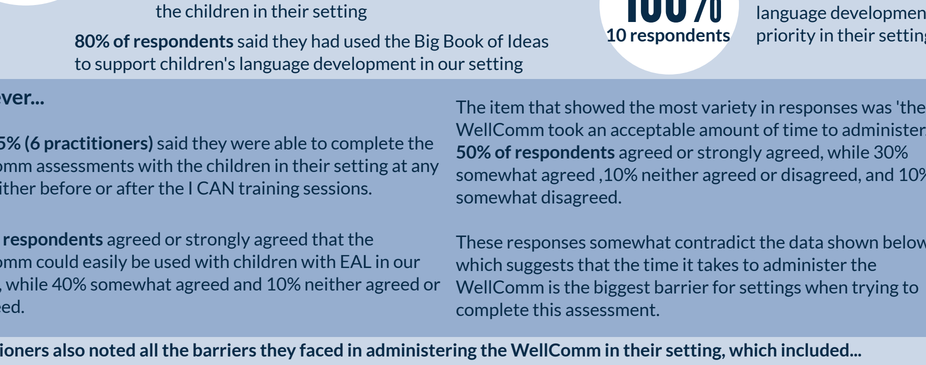
Only **55% (6 practitioners)** said they were able to complete the WellComm assessments with the children in their setting at any point either before or after the I CAN training sessions.

50% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the WellComm could easily be used with children with EAL in our setting, while 40% somewhat agreed and 10% neither agreed or disagreed.

The item that showed the most variety in responses was 'the WellComm took an acceptable amount of time to administer.' **50% of respondents** agreed or strongly agreed, while 30% somewhat agreed ,10% neither agreed or disagreed, and 10% somewhat disagreed.

These responses somewhat contradict the data shown below, which suggests that the time it takes to administer the WellComm is the biggest barrier for settings when trying to complete this assessment.

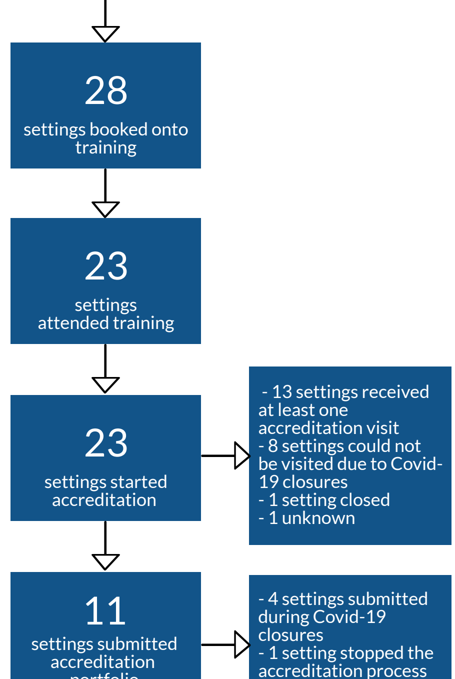
Practitioners also noted all the barriers they faced in administering the WellComm in their setting, which included...



Overall, this suggests that many settings were not able to administer the WellComm, despite considering it to be a useful tool to assess an important skill. The biggest barrier to using the WellComm was the time it takes to administer.

Recruitment and Implementation

Participant Flow diagram



Satisfaction

What did the practitioners think of the training?

Unfortunately only 36 practitioners returned satisfaction questionnaires. This means 16% of participants completed the satisfaction questionnaire. These results should therefore be interpreted cautiously, as it is unclear if this is a representative sample of the practitioners receiving the training.

100% of respondents had a median score of 4 or more

100% (n=34) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the project was helpful to them

100% (n=34) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that enjoyed the interactive elements of the training

100% (n=34) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the information they received was appropriate

100% (n=32) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the materials and tools were useful

100% (n=32) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend the training to colleagues

100% (n=32) of respondents were happy with the training overall

Appendix - Progression Criteria Cutoffs

For more information on how progression criteria and associated cut-offs have been developed please see Bryant, et al., 2019 Use of progression criteria to support monitoring and commissioning decision making of public health services: lessons from Better Start Bradford. BMC Public Health