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| Evaluating practitioners’ experiences of |
| Developing fine motor skills for emergent writing |
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| **6/1/2016** |

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**Introduction**

The University of Huddersfield were commissioned by Teamworks to evaluate the practitioners’ experiences as they took part in the project ‘Developing Fine Motor Skills for Emergent Writing’. This year long project was funded by NCTL and was launched in June 2015. It sought to raise attainment in writing by improving fine motor skills, as the evidence suggests that boys perform less well than girls in writing at every key stage (DfE2012) and enjoy writing less (National Literacy Trust NLT 2014). This matters because writing and reading go hand in hand and writing helps children formulate their thoughts, and improve creativity (NLT2014). Whilst there are many reasons for the attainment gap between boys and girls in writing, it is suggested that boys lack the skills, including fine motor skills, to write (National Strategies 2009). Early Years’ data in the local authority of Calderdale shows 55% of children achieved a good level of development (GLD) in 2014, below national (60%) and regional (59%) levels of achievement. In particular, disadvantaged male pupils attain poorly, only 30% in Calderdale achieved GLD. The total number of children in the borough in the lowest 20% for EYFSP was 555, 62% of whom were boys. The attainment gap between boys and girls at the end of Early Years Foundation Stage is wider in writing than any other aspect of learning.

**Outline of the project**

Teamworks identified 10 early years’ settings in the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector based in areas of significant deprivation to take part in the project. The project required practitioners from each setting to select a small group of approximately 5 children aged between 36 and 48 months to take part in a ten week programme of play dough based activities. Each activity session lasted approximately 3 minutes and the sessions took place 3 times a week. To enable tracking of the children’s fine motor development each child was assessed at the start and at the end of the programme. The practitioners were trained in how to deliver the programme, assess the children and the associated record keeping, and each setting received a set of resources.

In addition the project aims were to strengthen collaboration among the parties and to create an infrastructure locally to support this in a sustainable way. It was agreed that the university would undertake a qualitative study to explore the perceptions and experiences of the practitioners involved in delivery of the programme. The aims of this aspect of the study were:

1. To explore the practitioners’ perceptions and experiences of implementation and sustained delivery of the programme in their setting
* Impact/success

2) To explore the practitioners’ perceptions and experiences of participating in the programme

* Collaboration
* Availability of support
* Training
* Understanding the purpose
1. To identify barriers and challenges to sustainability of the programme

**Methodology**

The research team worked with Teamworks to agree a suitable methodology which incorporated a longitudinal design tracking the same practitioners over time and meeting with them on three occasions as detailed in table1. This approach was chosen to map, in detail, any changes in their perceptions and experiences which might occur over time. Each of the participants were required to sign a Memorandum of Understanding provided by Teamworks which outlined the aims of the project and the participants’ involvement, in addition written informed consent was obtained before the participants took part in the first focus group, and verbal consent was obtained at each subsequent focus group. Following each focus group a report was submitted to the Quality Improvement Team for feedback and to inform the ongoing implementation and support of the programme. These reports can be found in appendix (2).

**Methods of Data Collection**

For the purposes of this study it was decided that data would be gathered through focus groups. This was to establish, from the outset, a collaborative approach to put the participants at ease, build confidence and generate new ideas through the interactions of the group. The focus group approach allows participants to talk to each other and relate to experiences with others in the group who are more than likely to share a common frame of reference focusing on a specific topic (Kidd and Parshall 2000: 294; Marrelli 2008: 39).Focus groups are also useful for eliciting large amounts of information from a small group, but there are limitations to this as it can be difficult to distinguish an individual view from the group, and individuals can be influenced by others in the group (Silverman 2010). The researchers were sensitive to this limitation and offered every member of the group an opportunity to contribute. We had also established a rapport with the participants as we met with them on two occasions before data collection began.

The focus groups were recorded and independently transcribed. The table below provides an outline of researcher activity including the scheduled dates for the focus groups. The other activities are included as they allowed the researchers to be introduced to the participants and build an initial relationship.

Table 1 Schedule of Researcher Activity

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Date | Activity |
| 10/2/15  | Project meeting |
| 20/5/15 | Project Launch-introduced to the participants |
| 14/6/15 | Focus Group 1 |
| 9/6/15 | Conference-met with participants |
| 25/11/15 | Focus group 2 |
| 1/12/15 | Conference |
| 16/3/2016 | Focus group 3 |

An outline of the questions from each focus group can be found in appendix 1 and initial findings in appendix 2

**Analysis**

The recordings were transcribed independently and the data was subjected to a thematic analysis informed by the aims of the study. Analysis of the findings was undertaken within a short period of time following the focus groups in order to identify emerging themes at an early stage (Gray 2014). However the researchers remained alert to additional themes suggested by the data which were outside the aims of the project.

**Themes identified:**

* **Impact**
	+ **Children**
	+ **Practitioners**
	+ **Setting**
* **Collaboration**
* **Availability of support**
* **Training**
* **Barriers to implementation/sustainability of the programme**

**Findings**

**Impact**

**Children:** All of the participants reported that the children on the programme had made progress in developing their fine motor skills. The participants who had completed the final assessments reported that the majority of the children initially graded as ‘arriving’ had progressed to a grading of ‘secure’ at the end of the programme. Participants also reported improvements particularly in the levels of self- esteem and concentration in the boys taking part.

**Practitioners:** All participants reported improved levels of confidence and that their knowledge and understanding of children’s physical development had improved. They were inspired by the first conference and welcomed the additional resources they received for taking part in the project.

**Setting**: The participants reported that the settings had benefitted from the additional resources that taking part in the programme had brought and that it had also had a positive impact on other members of staff. They described their colleagues as more enthusiastic, moving about more and more aware of the need to include physical development in their planning and continuous provision.

**Collaboration**: The participants reported that they worked well together in the moderation meetings and enjoyed the opportunity to discuss the programme. They also valued these meetings as an opportunity to seek advice from each other and from the Quality Improvement Team. However, between meetings the participants reported that they did not contact each other and thought that it would have been useful to have an online forum for the group.

**Availability of support**: All of the participants reported that support from the Quality Improvement Team was excellent; they responded quickly to e-mail/telephone queries and in the early stages of the programme offered support and encouragement. They welcomed the timely production of the DVD which provided them with clarity and reassurance.

**Training:** All of the participants agreed that the first conference was a significant aspect of their training. They described it as informative, inspirational and highly motivating. They also felt that the training provided by the Quality Improvement Team had been thorough and very straightforward. Only two participants had regularly completed the reflective journals and the rest of the participants remained confused as to their purpose and as to what they were expected to write in them. Participants also stated that time was an issue in completing the reflective journals and they tended to take notes rather than reflect. The participants described the second conference as repetitive and were unclear about its purpose.

**Barriers to implementation/Sustainability**: There were some initial teething problems with implementation in several settings for example staff sickness, finding a suitable space and selecting the children which meant most settings postponed the start until September 2015. Some found the initial assessments problematic, they described them as too long which meant some children were difficult to assess. However most of these teething problems were overcome and there were no significant barriers identified to implementation of the programme.

In the longer term the participants reported that the ‘paperwork’ was time consuming but generally manageable. One setting continued to struggle to find adequate space. However, all participants agreed that they would continue with the programme once the project had finished. Two settings have incorporated into their continuous provision, others felt that they would perhaps continue with an amended version, and one participant thought that they would use it if they identified that a child required additional support with their physical development.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion the participants’ experience of and perspectives on the programme were very positive. They reported significant progress in the children’s physical development and improvements for some children in their self-esteem and levels of concentration. In addition they noted that involvement in the project had a positive impact on them, their practice and on the other staff in the setting. The participants and their colleagues in the setting were more enthusiastic about planning and implementing activities to support children’s physical development, as the project had increased their understanding of the importance of developing children’s fine motor skills in order to support emergent writing. However, the findings also suggest that collaboration between settings was not established beyond the moderation meetings, although all of the participants appreciated the opportunities to meet and discuss the project. Initial problems with delivery and assessment were quickly overcome and support from the Quality Improvement Team was considered excellent. Finally all the participants reported that their settings will continue with the programme in some format.

**Appendix 1**

Focus group meeting 1 – 4/6/2015

Focus group questions:

What do they understand about the project and its purpose?

What are their initial thoughts and feelings?

Have they been involved in anything similar?

What are their experiences of working with other schools/settings?

What do they anticipate will be the challenges?

How did they feel after the launch in terms of organisation and preparation?

What are their initial thoughts of the resource pack and its contents?

Have the sample of children been chosen and if so how?

Focus Group meeting 2 – 25/11/2015

Focus group questions:

How do you feel the baseline assessments were arranged and conducted?

Has training been adequate, particularly for completing paperwork?

How is inputting the requested baseline data from the assessors going, (they felt there was some concern)?

Are you keeping records of developmental progress and how is this going? How do you record and assess this?

Have you started completing the reflective journals and how are these developing?

What are your thoughts on the moderation meeting you have just had?

Do you feel that your own skills are developing and maybe other practitioners in the setting through carrying out this programme? i.e. confidence...

Do you think the programme is making a difference to the boys emerging writing skills? How are the children reacting to the programme? i.e. enjoyment.

How do you think you can support each other in order to sustain the programme and share good practice, or are any of you in contact with each other already? If so, is the support useful...?

How are the children reacting to the programme and overall how do you think the programme is working?

Focus group meeting 3 – 16/3/2016

Focus group questions:

Has every setting now completed the programme (how many times)?

Can you tell us about the benefits of the programme- last time spoke about benefits for children and staff, can we do the same this time

 Children

 Staff

Can you tell us about any challenges or problems encountered?

Last time some of you were unsure about completing the paperwork, not sure if it was meant to be on line etc. Are these issues resolved?

Can you tell us what you thought/felt about completing the paperwork, was it manageable? How has it been used?

What about the reflective journals- has everyone completed one, what did you think/feel about them?

Last time you were working on putting something together to tell parents about the programme-what did you do? How did that go?

After attending the Alistair Bryce-Clegg Conference and one hour training in December with Alistair what did you learn and did you / would you make any changes to the programme?

Will you continue with the programme, will you select children to take part?

Will any of you keep in touch? Has a network been set up to help you share practice?

Did you feel that the senior team responded to the concerns you raised in these groups which we reported to them e.g. a video of actions, how to complete paperwork

Overall what are your thoughts and feelings about the programme, can you tell us what the highlights have been and what could be done differently next time?

**Appendix 2 Interim reports after each focus group**

**Calderdale Project: Developing Fine Motor Skills to Improve Emergent Writing**

Focus group 1 4/6/2015

Present: All settings were represented, Nicola Firth and Sam McMahon from the University of Huddersfield

Venue: Halifax Primary Academy

**Feedback**

* All of the participants had a sound understanding of the project and its aims and most are enthusiastic about their involvement, and looking forward to getting started. One stated she is *‘raring to go’.* Generally they thought it seemed manageable and would complement what they are already doing. One participant has concerns about a suitable space and felt it might be more difficult to fit with the routine if children have to move to another room.
* Most felt the evening launch event was useful and most commented that the resource pack looked inviting, exciting and they were looking forward to using it. A few had not had an opportunity to look at the resource pack as it had been picked up by a more senior member of staff.
* All the settings aim to start the project in September. Two settings had initially thought they might start in June but there were some difficulties with the initial assessment of the children. They felt that the assessment was too long, the paperwork was over complicated and it did not accurately reflect the children’s abilities. The project team are amending the assessment but the participants asked for a simplified version that they could use, as they felt this would give a more accurate assessment of the children. They commented that it was unsettling for the children to be assessed by unfamiliar adults.
* One setting had to cancel the pre-arranged children’s assessments due to staff sickness so decided to start the project in September for this reason.
* One setting had already used the activities which they thought were very easy, even practitioners who lack confidence in getting active were involved. The children indicate that they want to do the activities by picking up the resource pack, they use music the children enjoy (Frozen), and toddlers tend to have one song, 3-4 year olds two songs.
* There were a number of questions and some confusion about selecting the sample:
1. Some children not in 3 times a week, is it alright to do it twice on one day?
2. Some children are in consecutive days, others every other day, does it matter?
3. Can they do it more often with children who have special needs, or some developmental delay?
4. What if they don’t have many boys?
5. Starting early in September maybe difficult for new children as they will still be transitioning, can they start later or have a staggered start?
6. What if a child from the sample group is off sick for a period of time?
* All of the participants seemed to think their involvement will end after 10 weeks; will they start the programme again?
* All of the participants welcomed the opportunity to work together; some have good relationships with local schools and have transition arrangements in place but would like to be able to share the project with them. Discussion also took place about how information is shared with schools prior to the children leaving the setting to start school, perhaps sharing this type of project could help with this. In order to facilitate sharing good practice and support the practitioners we wondered if it would be possible for the project team to set up a Facebook page, most of the participants thought this would be a good idea.

 **Calderdale Project: Developing Fine Motor Skills to Improve Emergent Writing**

Focus Group 2-25/11/2015

Present: Whitehill Academy - 9 settings represented, Sam McMahon, Nicola Firth

The focus group took place in the training room at Whitehill Academy and followed on from the moderation meeting. Ten practitioners were present and 9 settings were represented. The settings were at different points in implementing the programme, 1 setting has completed the 10 week cycle, 3 settings were at week 1, other settings were at week 3 (1), 4 (3) and at week 8 (1). The following report is a summary of the practitioners’ responses which were selected, and are organised to highlight key themes which emerged in the focus group. The data has not been fully transcribed; however extensive notes were taken at the time and the focus group was recorded. The researchers have listened to the recording, made notes, and selected some direct quotes for use in the report, although these have been tidied up for inclusion in this report.

**Baseline assessment**- The practitioners have generally found the baseline assessments to be very simple and straightforward. They described the training as being very thorough and the training team were approachable so the practitioners felt they could ask if they were unsure about the process. Some practitioners said that they had found the assessments to be rather long and this meant that some of the children became restless *‘especially the boys’*, with one practitioner stating ‘*girls would sit all the way through’*. They resolved this by giving the children a break and separating the assessment in to 2 or 3 sections.

**Data input**-Only two settings were aware that the data should be inputted onto a computer. The practitioners would like this to be clarified. It can be difficult to get time on the computer and any time they do have is normally used to print out photographs and update learning journeys.

**Selection of children**-The practitioners select the children but the selection criteria are not standardised. Most have identified 5 key children, aged 3, with one setting selecting 7 key children. Some settings selected children they thought would benefit because they ‘struggle’ and one setting had also included ‘more advanced’ children to see if they would benefit from the programme. Several small settings took a practical approach to selection based on how often children attended. Most settings had identified ‘back up’ children, to fill in in case of absence etc. Some settings had a boy only group, other mixed girls and boys.

**Reflective journals**-All of the practitioners were aware that they had to complete the reflective journals; two practitioners had done so. Some practitioners felt confident about completing the journals, others are less confident as they have not had much guidance and are not sure how the journals will be used. Most practitioners were using the *‘book’* to make *‘notes’* and one stated, *‘I’ve been told to make notes’* and another practitioner agreed saying ‘*she just said to make notes’* this was when the reflective journal / book was given to the practitioner. Some practitioners felt it could be time consuming having to reflect.

**Effect on practitioners**-All of the practitioners felt the conferences had been extremely beneficial in extending their knowledge and understanding of physical development, in particular developing children’s fine motor skills. All have gained in confidence and one practitioner described ‘*feeling lucky, privileged to be involved’.* Another explained that she was ‘*passing on the benefits’* to other settings and practitioners in her setting. The practitioners are cascading the training to other staff members and have found that they in turn have gained confidence, and are focusing on the children’s fine manipulative skills. One practitioner said it was nice to focus on something other than language and PSED, she said

‘*They (the staff) see the bigger picture; they understand how children develop the skills for writing. Instead of going straight to the hand they start with the shoulder’.*

One practitioner described feeling ‘*empowered*’ by her involvement in the project and although some were only at week 1, all practitioners said they were feeling positive about their involvement in the project. Most of the practitioners felt greater parental involvement was to be welcomed; some already had parents who were very interested. They were enthusiastic about the task to create a resource for parents about the programme. Only one setting felt that parents would probably not be interested; however as a result of the discussion during the focus group they have agreed to create a display or noticeboard to share information about the project with parents.

**Effect on the children**- In the setting which has completed a 10 week cycle of the programme the practitioner commented that all of the children involved had made progress in their fine manipulative skills. Those at week 4 had also noticed an improvement particularly in handling scissors, although they had bought new scissors as recommended at the conference. They also had noticed an improvement in some of the children’s ‘independence skills’ e.g. pulling the Velcro across to fasten their shoes and in buttoning their coats. They have noticed some children who are more reserved seem to have gained in confidence and are willing to join in with the sessions. The practitioners who are 4 weeks into the programme commented that the children were concentrating better and were more focused on trying to follow all of the movements. Some children with English as an additional language, who have been quiet and reluctant to join in generally in the setting, are taking part the dough sessions.

The practitioners described most of the children as being ‘very enthusiastic’ about the sessions and one explained that the children couldn’t wait to join in when they saw her *‘grab the CD player’* and the practitioner also said ‘*children remind us they want to do it’*. In one setting the sessions are held in a separate room and some of the children are reluctant to leave their play and take part. The practitioners in this setting try and encourage the children to take part and have opened the session to more children so friends are together; this has made it more appealing. Another setting had asked the key children to draw themselves prior to starting the project and observed their fine motor skills; she is going to ask them to do the same activity at the end of the 10-week programme in order to re-assess fine motor development.

**Practitioners’ suggestions**

It would be helpful to have a video of all the moves as some of the descriptions are a little confusing and the pictures are quite small. One practitioner explained that her colleague ‘*didn’t know what a lasso is’,* others wondered about the windmill-(one arm or both at a time) and round the dough had also caused confusion.

They would like clarification about data inputting-should it be on the computer? Also some would like greater clarity about the reflective journals, how to complete them and what they are for.

It would be helpful to have everyone’s contact details so that they could network with each other and share information. The practitioners felt this would be a very good way to support each other, share best practice and check on their understanding, one practitioner thought such a network would help with *‘standardisation’*.

**Summary**

The practitioners’ enthusiasm for and commitment to the programme is high. All of the practitioners felt that the training they had received particularly through the conferences had been beneficial in terms of extending their knowledge of children’s development and in improving their confidence. In addition the positive effects were being felt more widely in the setting by other staff. Significantly they reported that they had seen progress in children’s development specifically in independence tasks such as buttoning coats and putting on shoes. They reported significant improvement in children’s abilities to use scissors, although they did acknowledge that new scissors had been purchased to support children in developing these skills. Some reported children as gaining in confidence and that their concentration skills had also improved. Most were very positive about parental engagement. Some practitioners expressed anxiety about ‘*doing the actions wrong’* and only two practitioners were aware that they were expected to input data onto a computer, they would like this to be clarified. There was also some uncertainty about how to fill in the reflective journals. Although the participants were unsure about the purpose of the moderation meeting they found the opportunities to meet and discuss the project very useful and thought it would be helpful if they could do this informally, either, through a virtual environment or just by having each other’s contact details.

**Calderdale Project: Developing Fine Motor Skills to Improve Emergent Writing**

Focus Group 16/3/16

**Present:** Whitehill Academy - Sam McMahon & Nicola Firth 7 Participants

The focus group took place in the training room at Whitehill Academy and followed on from the moderation meeting. Seven practitioners were present and six settings were represented. The settings had all completed the initial 10-week programme and were planning to start the second cohort after the Easter break on 11th April 2016.All of the settings will be selecting new children to take part in the second round of the programme and most will continue to use the same selection criteria as in the first round. However, one setting plans to include only children who are in receipt of the nursery education grant in the second round, as they explained that they are trying to find out if these children will make the same amount of progress as the children who took part in the first round of the programme. These children were privately funded and usually attend full time (approx. 51 weeks per year) rather than term time only as in the funded children (38 weeks per year). The participant explained, ‘*the little girl who is amazing at writing is private’* and she wanted to see if the funded children would make the same amount of progress. At one setting they will continue to include a boy who has already completed the programme as they thought he would benefit from a second round and one setting will also include girls this time, as they had focused on boys in the last round.

The following report is a summary of the practitioners’ responses which were selected, and are organised to highlight key themes which emerged in the focus group. The data has not been fully transcribed; however extensive notes were taken at the time and the focus group was recorded. The researchers have listened to the recordings, made notes, and included some direct quotes which have been tidied up for the report.

**Benefits of the Programme:**

**Staff –** Participants felt that the programme had a positive impact on the rest of the staff in the setting. They reported that other staff were using their initiative in seeking out activities in order to promote fine motor skills. They felt that in the past there had been less importance placed on developing fine motor skills and that the programme has raised levels of awareness of the importance of physical development. The participants thought there was a better understanding of how fine motor skills develop; from the shoulder down through the wrist into the hand. One setting is planning to get more staff involved with the second round of the programme. More fine motor skills activities have been implemented into continuous provision with one setting mentioning ‘funky fingers’ as an example. All of the participants agreed that they were now disseminating the training to their colleagues in the setting

**Children –** All settings agreed that children on the programme have developed fine motor skills and the settings who had completed assessments stated that most children who were assessed as ‘*arriving’,* with respect to certain tasks e.g. cutting along a line, at the beginning of the programme have now progressed to ‘secure’ by the end of the programme. Participants also reported improvements in the boy’s self-esteem and levels of concentration throughout the programme.

In one setting a child had reduced their hours of attendance during the programme and transferred to another setting. As the setting is also participating in the project it has been agreed by the practitioners from each setting that he should be allowed to take part in the programme in his new setting. This has been seen as useful by the practitioners from the settings involved.

**Challenges:**

It has been difficult in some settings to deliver the programme in a continuous block of 10 weeks due to school holidays. Therefore, it has been challenging to say exactly how many weeks they have completed, some settings thought it was closer to 12-weeks to complete the programme. Although most settings stopped the programme altogether during the holiday period one setting stated they continued to ‘*do the moves’* but did not complete the paperwork as most of their children were ‘private’.

One setting reported that they were struggling to assess two boys selected for the second cohort, they said they are ‘*just not up for it, they don’t want to come and do the whole base lining thing’*; however, they also said that they had got some good ideas of how to get the boys interested from other members of the group.

 **Conference in December:**

The general agreement was that the second conference was *‘repetitive’*. When the participants met with Alistair Bryce-Clegg in the afternoon they did not feel prepared, they felt that ABC had different expectations from them. One explained ‘it *seemed as if he wanted us to ask questions, but we were not prepared for that*’ and one participant commented, ‘*it was all a bit strange’*. However, another participant stated that ‘*he is very inspiring’* the others agreed.

**Paperwork (inc. reflective journals)**

Use of reflective journals was different across the participants. One participant was said to have written a lot (participant now left the project) whereas another participant stated that *‘I did it for the first couple of weeks but then it just sat in the folder*’. Several participants agreed that it was difficult to find time to complete the journals along with the other documentation. They tended to use the ‘Dough Gym book’ to reflect on what worked well and not so well. The overall consensus was that there had been more paperwork to complete than initially expected; however, when they got used to it the paperwork became more manageable. They also felt that the assessments and some of the commentary in the Dough Gym Book was useful as it could be transferred to the children’s learning journeys

**Parent Participation:**

One setting has produced a parent pack this includes a pot of dough, pictures of some of the moves and a notebook. This was requested by parents and they have completed it and included photographs. All of the participants thought this was a good idea and are considering adopting this approach; however the setting which produced the pack admitted that only a couple of parents were interested and the general consensus from the group was that parents were not ‘*overly-interested’*.

**Continuation of the Programme:**

Settings agreed that they would continue to use the programme but adapt it so it is not as *‘strict and structured’*; they will still do dough dance and introduce the resources into continuous provision. They admitted that the initial enthusiasm is likely to be lost but they would be keen to reintroduce it for specific children who need it. One setting is including the programme into their daily routine in each area of the nursery and will adapt the moves to suit the age and ability of the children. All participants agreed the programme is more effective in the morning, as the children tend to have more energy.

**Support from the Senior Project Team:**

Concerns have been actioned and the team were quick to respond to queries or concerns. The participants felt supported.

**Overall reflections on the Programme:**

* Feedback on the first conference was extremely positive the participants variously described being ‘*inspired’* or ‘*having their eyes opened’* one said ‘*it was fascinating learning all about the shoulder and how that works’*
* They all felt that there had been considerable benefit for them, the children and other staff in the setting from taking part in the programme. One said ‘*it’s getting them all up and moving about’.*
* The money for resources had been really beneficial, and much appreciated. One setting explained that as a charity they ‘*don’t have spare pennies so it was really good to say, you know, I’m going to spend this on fine motor skills for my children’.*
* They would all be very happy to take part in similar schemes in the future

Improvements

* The participants felt that it would have been better had they all started the programme at the same time and if they had been brought together for training on the paperwork, assessment etc. That way they thought there would be fewer opportunities for ‘*crossed wires’.*

**Summary**

The participants were overwhelmingly positive in their response to the programme, highlighting benefits for their own professional development, children’s developmental progress and also improving the motivation and enthusiasm of other staff in the setting. They were inspired by the first conference, less so by the second, but found the resources very helpful. Most settings will continue with some, albeit reduced, form of the programme once the project has ended. There were some minor issues with paperwork and many were not using the reflective journals. They felt well supported by the team and would participate in any similar projects in the future.