

# **Exploring and Developing Regional Hubs of Early Years Practice and CPD**

**North Liverpool Teaching School  
Partnership**

**August 2015**

# Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
Background	3
Context	3
Key Findings	3
INTRODUCTION	6
METHODOLOGY	8
Sample	8
Methods and timeline	8
Data Analysis	8
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION OF THEMES	10
I. What happened?	10
Leading training using a model of good practice	11
Leading network building to address transition issues	11
Piloting projects on a small scale	11
Placing emphasis on strategies to disseminate research	11
II. Building networks of trust	12
Context	12
Approaches to projects	12
III. Organising Continuing Professional Development (CPD)	13
Context	13
Approaches to projects	14
IV. Sustainable systems leadership	16
Context	16
Approaches to projects	16
CONCLUSION	18
REFERENCES	20
APPENDICES	21
Appendix 1	21
Appendix 2	43
Appendix 3	44

# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

## **Background**

This project was initiated by the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) in order to explore and test models that bring together and engage all types of early years providers in local improvement networks or hubs. The aim of developing local networks is part of the NCTL vision, as outlined in 2014 by Charlie Taylor, Chief Executive of the NCTL, to develop a school-led system in which school leaders take a lead in improving the education of all children from birth to 18.

## **Context**

In order to test the models for creating local early years improvement networks, 20 Teaching Schools were selected by the NCTL following an open Expression of Interest and application process. Everton Nursery School and Family Centre in Liverpool, on behalf of the North Liverpool Teaching School Partnership, was selected to lead this national project. Participants were representative of as wide a geographical area of England as possible. The research methods and data collection were designed by Dr Lesley Curtis (Headteacher at Everton Nursery School and Family Centre) in collaboration with early years colleagues at the NCTL. The team of 6 researchers from LJMU met with Dr Curtis in September to establish the parameters of their role in data analysis. Data analysis was conducted within an interpretive, collaborative model with theory building emerging from the data guided by key relevant academic and policy literature. Interim findings were shared with the participants mid-way through the project in the spirit of an action research cycle of change and improvement.

## **Key Findings**

At the conclusion of the project, the various initiatives led by the teaching schools to engage all types of early years local providers in local improvement hubs can be summarised as follows:

## **Challenges**

1. Building trust with PVI and childminders - mitigated by greater attention to consultation mechanisms and exercising a flexible approach to the time and location of meetings.

2. Engaging all participants in CPD - mitigated by gaining clear feedback from providers about their training needs and involving them in the design of future training.
3. Reaching a wide geographical spread of providers - mitigated by a series of smaller replicable projects to facilitate more local engagement.

## **Benefits**

1. A focus on how children learn by involving parents and using a common training tool which helped to provide an inclusive approach to training.
2. The use of common language and shared definitions of concepts such as 'school readiness' which provided a sense of joint purpose.
3. A diverse mix of participants including EYTTs which engendered synergy and a sense of common professional goals across the workforce.
4. The use of websites to disseminate project work and support communication to a wider set of participants.
5. The involvement of a diverse network including local authorities, HEIs, teaching consultants and other teaching alliances which supported the sustainability of projects.

## **Critical success factors**

1. Embedding review, evaluation and dissemination into the design of projects.
2. Integrating the perspectives and needs of the PVI and childminder sector into design of training.
3. Building a culture of enquiry at the level of practice.
4. Considering early years trainees and hub leaders in plans for continuing professional development.
5. Demonstrating values and ideas which are common for both strategic and pedagogical aims.
6. Adopting the language of Hargreaves' (2012) self-improving system, to evaluate practice.



# INTRODUCTION

This report builds on the findings of interim evaluation report by Liverpool John Moores University in conjunction with Everton Nursery School and Family Centre which was finalised for the project in November 2014 (see Appendix 1). The project which these reports evaluated was initiated by the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) in order to explore and test models that bring together and engage all types of early years providers in local improvement networks or hubs linked to teaching schools or alliances. The aim of developing local improvement networks is part of the NCTL vision to develop a system in which school leaders take a lead in improving the education of all children from birth to 18 years. Further details of the background to the project and its objectives can be found in the interim evaluation report (Appendix 1).

The vision for a 'birth-to-18' education system was set out in a speech by Charlie Taylor, Chief Executive of the NCTL in April 2014. In this speech, he asserted that the 'expertise and experience' of the early years sector should be harnessed as part of a 'world-class' birth-to-18 system led by the best schools and early years providers working together for the benefit of children. In support of this vision, Taylor stated that early years teachers' standards have been developed in parallel with other new teaching standards, so that elements of good teaching across the entire age range can be identified in common. This means that early years providers are now better positioned to work alongside schools to support local quality improvement within a 'self-improving system'.

The project reported on here is one initiative which aims to explore how teaching schools across England can successfully lead collaborative developments between schools and early years providers to improve practices and share goals. As part of the research design, the project encouraged participants to undertake small scale action research projects to improve practice. The overall project contributed to these action research cycles through the dissemination of the interim evaluation report and also through the opportunity provided for participants to meet up and share progress with each other. In this way, the research design has also adopted an iterative feature of self-improvement and action research.

Key questions that this final report will aim to answer are:

1. What challenges and benefits have emerged from research into developing regional early years hubs?
2. What are the critical success factors for leading regional early years hubs?

The work of David Hargreaves (2012) informs the policy direction for a 'self-improving system'. Hargreaves' model for developing a mature system was the key reference point for the participant teaching schools in the project and provided a framework for the analysis of the project and its progress. A 'maturity model', adapted from Hargreaves (2012) for an early years context was adopted as part of the project design to guide self-evaluation and inform the analysis and language of the interim evaluation. Therefore, in line with a maturity model framework, this final evaluation will also report on the levels of maturity which teaching schools have reached as part of their self-evaluation exercise (see Appendix 2).

# METHODOLOGY

## Sample

Continuation (as outlined in the interim report) of the same 20 Teaching Schools selected by the NCTL and led by Everton Nursery School and Family Centre on behalf of the North Liverpool Teaching School Partnership (see Appendix 3).

## Methods and timeline

Following on from phase one of the project (February to November 2014), data has been disseminated and collected at these intervals.

**January 2015:** Regional events held where participant teaching schools shared experiences and reviewed the interim evaluation report.

**February and March 2015:** Participant teaching schools provided updated information focusing on four key aspects of their activities, including reference to impact.

**April 2015:** Participant teaching schools returned final updated information on the impact of the project.

**8 May 2015:** Early Years Hubs National Conference, NCTL, Nottingham.

## Data Analysis

In common with the approach to the interim evaluation report, the final report has taken an interpretive, collaborative model of theory building. The LJMU research team met in two phases to review the 'Update Information' document produced by the participant teaching schools in February and March 2015 (see above). Following this, the final updated information was then reviewed separately.

The key themes which were reported in the interim evaluation report document still have resonance and relevance in relation to the progress of the project (these were: acquiring knowledge for improving practice; the effect of policy drivers on aspirations; evidence of networking practices and patterns of confident leadership). However, a final evaluation of the project suggests reshaping of these themes, in terms of their importance for the developing early years hubs. Thus, recent findings will be discussed under three main headings. These are: building networks of trust; approaches to CPD; and sustainable systems leadership. These headings will also reframe the initial findings and lead us to conclusions and recommendations for the future. As with the interim report, evidence provided by participant teaching schools



will be woven into the narrative and the teaching schools will be referred to by name and in the initial overview of the projects below by numerical coding (see Appendix 3).

# FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION OF THEMES

The findings of the evaluation start with an overview of the activities that the teaching schools engaged in as part of the project. This account of the broad brush strokes of the project will then be developed further under the headings of the themes that emerged (as above).

## I. What happened?

As discussed in the interim evaluation report, at the outset of this project the 20 participant teaching schools used a model (NCTL, 2013) adapted from Hargreaves (2012) (see Appendix 2) to conduct a self-evaluation and establish a baseline score of maturity. These were then used to inform plans for the design of an early years hub project. The areas covered by these projects were: early language development; maths; transitions; assessment; and the school readiness agenda.

Following an interview about these individual projects (conducted between September and November 2014) with the national project lead from Everton Nursery School, the teaching schools reported back on the progress of the projects and their perceived impact. The feedback was mainly qualitative; for example: narrative descriptions of activities and quotation from participants. There are also examples of quantitative information such as: numbers of participants in related activities, including visitors to associated websites; numbers of children 'reached'; and percentage increase on maturity model scores.

In the process of analysing this feedback some key differences have emerged which will be developed in the themes and revisited in the conclusions. These concern: process and delivery-driven ways of working; different models of project design and operation; inclusion of and mutual respect for participants from diverse sectors, including parents; and the tie-in of initial professional development with continuing professional development.

The activities reported by the participant teaching schools have been broadly categorised as:

- Leading training using a model of good practice
- Leading network building to address transition issues
- Piloting work on a small scale
- Placing emphasis on strategies to disseminate research

An outline of types of activities in each of these categories has been provided below and examples of each type are elaborated upon in more depth under the different

themes sections. For ease, teaching schools have been number coded, in line with the original coding used in the interim report.

### **Leading training using a model of good practice**

Several teaching schools (1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 15 and 16) focused their projects on providing leadership for local training. These varied from providing training from the vantage point of 'leading from the front' as a model of good practice (1, 15) to developing a business model to provide high quality training to plug gaps in availability elsewhere (16). In other cases there was a clear emphasis on the use of an existing programme, in order to create a unified approach to practice across a wide range of settings (2, 3, 4, and 7).

### **Leading network building to address transition issues**

A focus on solid foundations for network building was very strong in some projects. Several teaching schools (5, 8, 9, 10, 12, 17, and 20) worked especially hard to establish wide ranging local networks which attempted to be inclusive of private and voluntary sector settings (PVI) within the hub, as well as the children's parents. Many reported genuine steps forward in joint work between settings (8, 10, and 12) but one teaching school pointed out that the effect of collaboration on practice and children's learning needed wider recognition within the hub (20). In three cases, collaborative working had led directly to benefits for all partners involved across the sector such as improving observation and assessment practices (9); creation of a 'school readiness agreement' (5) and greater parental involvement in rural areas (17).

### **Piloting projects on a small scale**

As an organisational strategy, some teaching schools decided to pilot projects on a small scale to gauge their effectiveness prior to reaching out to a wider range of settings (2, 13, and 18). These teaching schools applied a sharper focus to their work involving only a few settings, often as part of a triad model. This was with the express intention of more accurately measuring impact (2) or reaching out later with more knowledge and experience of joint working into new geographical areas (13, 18).

### **Placing emphasis on strategies to disseminate research**

A few teaching schools placed a very determined emphasis on encouraging and developing knowledge of research (11, 14 and 19). One setting held a conference for 400 practitioners (11) and another focused on strategies such as website development (14) and a research symposium for 30+ participants (19). These

activities were in addition to the integrated development of developing a culture of enquiry that many teaching schools worked towards, often with partners from higher education institutions (HEIs).

## **II. Building networks of trust**

### **Context**

This project took place at a time when the qualifications and workforce issues in the early years sector were being reviewed. By creating local early years networks or hubs and undertaking joint activities to boost the quality of the local early years sector, this project aimed to build trust between different types of early years settings. This was to evaluate whether such initiatives could minimise disparities in the levels of funding and staff qualifications and improve the 'maturity' of settings (Hargreaves, 2012).

### **Approaches to projects**

Teaching schools often found that building trust between different types of early years settings was a challenge. Different demands on and levels of qualification within, the PVI sector meant that more success was achieved when shared understandings were negotiated and the timing and location of joint meetings carefully thought through.

The Candleby Lane Teaching School Alliance (TSA) reported that involvement in their project of the PVI settings and Children's Centre staff had 'dropped off'. However, an audit of and focus on PVIs by Forest Way TSA had been beneficial in this regard. They established an Early Years Hub Strategy Group with membership from various stakeholders which then commissioned a nursery manager and a school based early years leader to lead the hub work to give a 'grass roots' approach to joint practice development. North Liverpool Teaching School Partnership (TSP) hosted 'learning walks' for PVIs to attend to share practice about the learning environment required for young children whilst Portsmouth TSA and Tyne Valley TSA both had plans to roll out their initial project and involve PVIs at a later stage. South Thames Early Education Partnership (STEEP) TSA, Kyra TSA and Ebor TSA recognised the need to include childminders and made some provision for this. STEEP TSA also noted that following their project there was a 'reduced sense of isolation for childminders'.

Projects were also more likely to report success when feedback had been gained from other settings in the hubs and initiatives focused on clear information from these settings, rather than teaching schools' perceived needs of those settings. For

example, Bradford Birth to 19 TSA changed the focus of their project to children's oral skills, as a result of the identification of local needs. To improve feedback from PVI, Nursery School Headteachers from the North Liverpool TSP attended PVI cluster group meetings across the city and Whitefield TSA reported that their project was successful in gaining participation from PVI settings through the use of focus groups. However, several TSA's experienced challenges in maintaining the engagement of PVI participants, suggesting the continuing need for consultation in order to analyse and address training issues for this sector.

Projects that focused on transition issues were well aligned with trust-building between different types of settings. These projects often prioritised shared definitions of issues such as school readiness and strategies for behaviour management. The Candleby Lane TSA and St Mark's TSA ensured that settings jointly agreed a definition of 'school readiness' whilst Woolacombe TSA worked in common age related groups and emphasised peer support strategies to create joint understandings. Severn TSA and Farlingaye and Kesgrave TSA found 'collective moral purpose' through shared practice and carrying out joint assessments.

Several teaching schools, such as Bradford Birth to 19 TSA and Tyne Valley TSA, found that small scale 'piloting' approaches to working together on projects helped them to assess the effectiveness of their approaches and measure impact before rolling these projects out to a wider geographical range of settings.

The use of triads for project work appeared to work well in many teaching schools and had the potential to be developed further as a strategy for working with both similar and different types of settings. Queen Katherine TSA said that they had found the close personal way of working very valuable as it had 'enabled them to reflect on and refine their practice'. Final data also showed that visiting other settings had been hugely beneficial for all aspects of trust-building and professional development. Candleby Lane TSA emphasised the opportunities for reflection that these visits had provided saying: that they 'acted as stimulus for developing practice, were seen as being powerful and therefore motivated practitioners to reflect and develop their own practice'.

### **III. Organising Continuing Professional Development (CPD)**

#### **Context**

As Lloyd and Penn (2014) note, there is a growing need to rethink approaches to early childhood education and care in the present political climate of the marketisation of the sector. Staff pay, conditions and in-service training are the largest cost in any business, so regulation needs to be in place to ensure that these

markers of quality are not compromised. One implication of this could be that high quality settings will be concentrated in wealthier areas (Lloyd and Penn, 2014). However, developing local early years hubs to organise and share CPD opportunities might be one way to safeguard quality and quantity in the present mixed economy of early years provision in England.

## **Approaches to projects**

By definition, all the projects carried out by the teaching schools were centred on strategies for continuing professional development. Some of the projects focused on an identified and agreed local need and as well as the importance of visits, the benefits of joint meetings was frequently stated, especially in the final data submitted (for example, Carmel TSA and Whitefield TSA). There was recognition of the importance of flexibility - not an 'off the shelf' model (STEEP TSA) or 'one size fits all' (Forest Way TSA). Meetings at Farlingaye and Kesgrave TSA worked best as 'solution-focused' and holding meetings at different locations and using a 'mixed delivery model' were successful strategies for Prestolee TSA and Carmel TSA, respectively. Working at a 'practitioner pace' was also cited as effective by Queen Katherine TSA.

Whilst for some teaching schools, for example, Whitefield TSA, choosing to work with high quality settings worked in the short term; they also noted that it is important to carry out action research at grass roots level and to locate innovative practice across a range of settings. Severn TSA also emphasised that good practice should be shared across a range of settings within a local area.

Many teaching schools found that a CPD focus on children's learning was a useful approach to meet training needs. Portsmouth TSA incorporated a focus on developing children's mathematical conceptual understanding through language and play and one of the nurseries in the network was rated 'Outstanding' and the research project in maths recognised as good practice.

The Characteristics of Effective Learning (CEL) programme was central to projects at Queen Katherine TSA, Prestolee Teaching School (TS), Carmel TSA and Camden Primary Partnership TSA. Several teaching schools (for example, Farlingaye and Kesgrave TSA) found that using programmes focused on communication skills enabled practitioners to share a common purpose, although it is worth considering the drawbacks of over reliance on these programmes, too. Camden Primary Partnership TSA was able to be more innovative in their approach to training through use of 'lesson study' as a professional development tool.

Several teaching schools explored ways of working with parents. Farlingaye and Kesgrave TSA reported that they had previously found it challenging to engage

parents. Ebor TSA found that expectations of parents needed to be clarified and some teaching schools (for example, Prestolee TSA) found that encouraging parents to take part in activities other than those focused on formal academic skills was successful in engaging them in a more relaxed way.

In terms of a more overt approach to CPD, there were examples of teaching schools involving a variety of early years student trainees (for example, Bradford Birth to 19 TSA and North Liverpool TSP), to enhance and stimulate the professional development in a wider than usual range of settings, including PVI's. Woolacombe TSA and Kyra TSA both pointed out that leaders also need coaching and support and that continuity of training needs to stretch in both directions.

Other teaching schools focused on organising training that was lacking from other training providers. Shepway TSA approached this with an emphasis on affordability and in-house training. Initially, they were unable to engage Children's Centres and one private provider chain, most likely because training budgets were tied to the local authority. However, as the project has developed, CPD courses became oversubscribed and attracted delegates from all over Kent. Consequently, because of this reputation for high quality training, PVI settings started to make more requests from them for CPD. Nevertheless, the compatibility and character of training, in line with the maturity model, will need particular consideration, as settings increasingly participate in a competitive and marketised economic environment. It is notable that Shepway TSA is also embedding partnership working with Canterbury Christ Church University, in order to develop training which reflects a broad base of expertise and enquiry.

Where CPD was particularly focused on research, there were several different strategies deployed by teaching schools. Bristol Early Years Consortium TSA, Whitefield TSA, Camden Primary Partnership TSA, Portsmouth TSA, Carmel TSA, Kyra TSA and Severn TSA all undertook a larger scale approach to knowledge transfer. Bristol Early Years Consortium TSA's ambitions included a vision to develop a research culture across the city of Bristol, by establishing an 'individual clinic' for practitioners wishing to complete their Masters' degrees. They reported that, although this work had started previously, the project had given it more momentum.

St Mark's TSA reported using 'inspiring and informative' speakers to motivate practitioners. This contrasted with more integrated approaches to CPD, as described in the sections above, which were fostered through small scale projects in settings. Whitefield TSA and Kyra TSA cited that research workshops to link theory and practice more firmly were successful. This emphasises the importance of understanding how to undertake informative and effective action research.

Significantly, Kyra TSA also raised the question of which staff should be undertaking action research to achieve the most impact.

The biggest challenge for a research-informed approach to development is the follow up that is needed to embed lessons from research into everyday practice. Some settings (for example, Bristol Early Years Consortium TSA and Forest Way TSA) provided additional ongoing support for research activity by using websites. Shepway TSA also reported that the website run by the Early Years Community Link Manager had helped to coordinate work across many isolated and small communities. However, it is worthy of note that some PVI partners (for example, Forest Way TSA) reported finding it difficult to access a web based approach to professional development.

## **IV. Sustainable systems leadership**

### **Context**

The context for early years provision as part of a Birth-to-18 system is now influenced by the new Conservative government elected in May 2015. The Conservative manifesto pledge was to increase nursery provision in schools, as well as increasing the entitlement amount of free provision to 30 hours per week for 3 and 4 year olds. These developments mean that the role of teaching schools in leading early years local improvement networks looks set to continue, making it even more important that strategies for the sustainability and growth of these networks are identified through this project.

### **Approaches to projects**

Many of the teaching schools considered how to make sustainable improvements to early years hubs through their projects. Carmel TSA and Severn TSA were careful to build in review, evaluation and dissemination to their design and Kyra TSA gave critical thought to the issue of how to measure impact. Ebor TSA had employed an additional teaching assistant to undertake speech and language therapy intervention and Farlingaye and Kesgrave TSA continued their speech and language therapy project by creating West Ipswich Early Years Partnership (WIEP) consisting of nine schools and eleven pre-schools working as a network.

St Marks TSA and Prestolee TSA were particularly concerned with developing equal relationships and the added issue for equity of listening to children was identified as important by Severn TSA. Some teaching schools (for example, Camden TSA, Prestolee TSA, Tyne Valley TSA) cited examples of transformative practice and significant gains for children. These will need further evaluation and opportunities to embed, in order to judge their viability. It is important to ensure, as Portsmouth TS's



work suggests, that gains for children with disabilities are included in evaluating transformative practice. Camden TSA and Woolacombe TSA adopted the language of the Hargreaves (2012) maturity model as a way to frame their projects and encourage the self-reflection needed to ensure inclusivity. These examples emphasise the role of language in changing attitudes to practice.

As was evident in the discussion of CPD, teaching schools such as The Candleby Lane TSA, Kyra TSA, Bristol Early Years Consortium TSA and Whitefield TSA emphasised building a culture of enquiry. Teaching schools also often initiated stronger links with the local authority (STEEP TSA); a teaching school board (Severn TSA); other hubs (St Mark's TSA); and universities (several examples including Camden TSA, Portsmouth TSA and Shepway TSA). These links make a birth-to-18 system possible and early years networks, though already diverse in nature, must include representatives from a wide range of sectors to become mature organisations. However, North Liverpool TSP also reported some frustrations with strategic education partners in Liverpool when childcare seemed to have more emphasis than the quality of early education experiences needed for young children.

Finally, to be fully mature, the work of an organisation should harmonise with and reflect its ethos. Forest Way TSA and Queen Katherine TSA in Cumbria both demonstrated significant alignment of approaches to network building with approaches to pedagogy. Queen Katherine's TSA also stressed the need for time to develop this and Kyra TSA mentioned 'time, commitment and capacity' as vital considerations for the success of a project.

# CONCLUSION

These examples from projects provide indications of both challenges faced and strategies used by participant teaching schools aiming to develop local early years networks or hubs, in line with the self-improving school system originally set out by Hargreaves (2012).

The projects all had varying degrees of success. Returning to the original two questions which this report set out to answer, the section below provides a summary and suggestions for the way forward to continue this development.

## **What challenges and benefits have emerged from the research into developing regional early years hubs?**

### **Challenges**

1. Building trust with PVI and childminders was restricted by the time, commitment and capacity this required. This was mitigated by greater attention to consultation mechanisms and exercising a flexible approach to the time and location of meetings.
2. The engagement of all participants in CPD was often limited due to the issues above. This was mitigated by gaining clear feedback from providers about their training needs and involving them in the design of future training.
3. The wide geographical spread of providers in some hubs created logistical barriers. This was mitigated by a series of smaller replicable projects to facilitate more local engagement.

### **Benefits**

1. A focus on how children learn by involving parents and using a common training tool which helped to provide an inclusive approach to training.
2. The use of a common language and shared definitions of concepts such as 'school readiness' which provided a sense of joint purpose.
3. The diverse mix of participants including EYTTs which engendered synergy and a sense of common professional goals across the workforce.
4. The use of websites to disseminate project work which supported communication to a wider set of participants.

5. The involvement of a diverse network including local authorities, HEIs, teaching consultants and other teaching alliances which supported the sustainability of projects.

### **What are the critical success factors for leading regional early years hubs?**

These focus on:

1. Embedding review, evaluation and dissemination into the design of projects.
2. Integrating the perspectives and needs of the PVI and childminder sector into design of training.
3. Building a culture of enquiry at the level of practice.
4. Considering early years trainees and hub leaders in plans for continuing professional development.
5. Demonstrating values and ideas which are common to both strategic and pedagogical aims.
6. Adopting the language of Hargreaves' (2012) self-improving system, to evaluate practice.

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# **APPENDICES**

## **Appendix 1**

**Interim Evaluation Report of:**

# **EXPLORING AND DEVELOPING REGIONAL HUBS OF EARLY YEARS PRACTICE AND CPD**

**North Liverpool Teaching School Partnership**

**Liverpool John Moores University**

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# Contents

INTRODUCTION	23
METHODOLOGY	25
INITIAL FINDINGS AND CHALLENGES	27
Acquiring knowledge for improving practice	27
Models of Continuing Professional Development (CPD)	29
Evidence of effective networking practices	32
Patterns of confident systems leadership	34
INTERIM RECOMMENDATIONS and NEXT STEPS	36
REFERENCES	37
APPENDICES	38
A1 – List of Participants Schools	38
A2 – Baseline Score of Maturity	39
A3 – Baseline Information Proforma	40
A4 – Interview Questions	41

## INTRODUCTION

This project has been initiated by the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) in order to explore and test models that bring together and engage all types of early years providers in local improvement networks or hubs. The aim of developing local improvement networks is part of the NCTL vision to develop a school-led system in which leaders, rather than government ministers, take a lead in improving the education of all children from 0-18.

Guidance for the project was provided by documentation on creating a self-improving school system by Hargreaves (2012). Hargreaves outlines three dimensions that lead a self-improving school system towards maturity. These are: professional development; partnership competence and collaborative capital. This model, which was designed for an increasingly self-supporting school system, has also been adapted and utilised by the NCTL (2013) to identify how early years system leadership can be strengthened by learning from others through peer to peer support, partnerships and networks. This provides a diagnostic tool that school leaders can use to establish whether they are beginning, developing, embedding or leading in each of these dimensions.

The Hargreaves model has also been endorsed by Siraj-Blatchford and Sum (2013) as relevant to the early years sector in which settings for young children, like schools, are becoming increasingly autonomous and flexible in terms of delivery. The key policy driver for changes in the early years sector within the last 20 years has been the need to narrow and now close the education attainment gap between children from affluent and disadvantaged backgrounds and this remains a current government policy aspiration as one of the objectives recommended in the 2014 State of the Nation Report (DfE and DWP).

Underpinning the notion of the quality assurance, which is needed to achieve this aspiration, is the development of shared practice across early years settings. These settings, which represent a mixed economy of maintained, voluntary and privately run organisations, are often geographically isolated and have varying levels of staff expertise, qualifications and knowledge. Some Sure Start Children's Centres (SSCCs) have been set up to offer the range of services needed to reduce the attainment gap for the most disadvantaged children. However, Ofsted has frequently pointed out that even SSCCs judged to be good often fail to share and use data effectively to drive forward service improvements. Siraj-Blatchford and Sum (2013) draw attention to emerging models of collaboration to form cluster groups as one way to build the capacity to disseminate ideas and reinforce the peer learning that will lead to a system of local improvement. However, the best model for achieving this in such a diverse sector is yet to be clearly evidenced. Thus, this project aims to

provide further evidence as to what builds and sustains effective networks in a system of local improvement.

The objectives for this research were:

- to explore and test regional hub models that provide practitioner-led networks, peer support and challenge and CPD opportunities
- to develop and implement a plan for engaging early years practitioners from the national teaching school network and across the early years sector
- to encourage and engage in a culture of enquiry that offers opportunities for professional dialogue, joint training and practice development
- to undertake rigorous evaluation and assess the outcomes of the adopted model
- to identify, capture and share evidence of what works, barriers and how these are overcome
- to collaborate with the funded teaching schools in order to develop a robust evidence base and recommend a coherent approach nationally
- to meet with the funded teaching schools throughout the initiative in order to discuss plans, deliverables and timelines to ensure that the objectives were met.

The key questions that the research addressed were:

1. How do teaching school alliances engage with the early years sector within a school-led system, to bring together and engage all types of early years providers in local improvement networks?
2. How does, or will this impact on the professional development, partnership competence and the collaborative capital dimension?



# METHODOLOGY

## The Sample

In order to test the models for creating local early years improvements networks, 20 Teaching Schools were selected by the NCTL. Everton Nursery School and Family Centre in Liverpool, on behalf of the North Liverpool Teaching School Partnership, was chosen to lead this national project within role as lead school as part of the North Liverpool Teaching School Partnership. Participants were representative of as wide a geographical area of England as possible (see A1 for list of participants).

## Methods and timeline

The research methods and data collection were designed by Dr Lesley Curtis (Headteacher at Everton Nursery School and Family Centre), in collaboration with early years colleagues at the NCTL.

**February 2014:** The 20 selected schools were first invited to put in an expression of interest to take part in the project.

**May 2014:** Representatives of the teaching schools met at Everton Nursery School and Family Centre and discussed starting points and the expression of interests. The adapted maturity model (NCTL, 2013) was used for each setting to establish a baseline score of maturity (see A2). These were returned along with baseline information (see A3) for the summer term from each setting. This information included plans for an early years hub project.

**July 2014:** A WebEx of developing themes was shared, in relation to early language development, transitions and the school readiness agenda.

**September 2014:** A team of 6 researchers from Liverpool John Moores University was commissioned to evaluate the project and analyse data, in partnership with Lesley Curtis at Everton Nursery and Family Centre.

**September, October and November 2014:** The head teacher and deputy head teacher from Everton Nursery School and Family Centre visited all other 19 teaching schools (still in progress) to see how they were progressing with their early years hub projects. 11 questions provided a focus for a face-to-face interview (see A4).

## Data analysis

The team of 6 researchers from LJMU met with Dr. Lesley Curtis in September to establish the parameters of their role in data analysis. The team represented considerable professional expertise within the early years sector, as well as research expertise within the field of early childhood and education more widely. Data

analysis was conducted within an interpretive, collaborative model with theory building emerging from the data and guided by the team's existing knowledge and experience and familiarisation with Hargreaves (2012) and Siraj-Blatchford and Sum (2013).

The first data set from each setting was examined and discussed by a pair of researchers and then presented to the research team to establish emerging themes from the data sets (excluding the webex and some interviews, to date) which were then encoded. Four main themes were identified from this coding process: Acquiring knowledge for improving practice; the effect of policy drivers on aspirations; evidence of networking practices and patterns of confident leadership. The initial draft was discussed, redrafted and agreed with Lesley Curtis. The initial findings below represent how this examined first data set has begun to address some of the objectives and research questions stated above. Some quotations from the data provided by the teaching schools has been presented in boxes to illustrate some points raised and, throughout, teaching schools have been referred to by number where they exemplified other key points which contributed to building themes.

# INITIAL FINDINGS AND CHALLENGES

## Acquiring knowledge for improving practice

Several teaching schools (2, 4, 8, 18, 19) identified the need to build a 'culture of enquiry' or 'research-based practice' to support their network development and improve children's learning. In at least one case (2), the terminology of 'visible learning community' was utilised as a method to provide coherence to this aspiration. In some cases (1, 14), the aim to develop a base of research knowledge was led by leaders who had gained postgraduate academic qualifications and in one case (19) practitioners who had gained foundation degrees were seen as a valuable source of research knowledge. In several cases (2, 3, and 8), links with Higher Education Providers/Institutions (HEIs) provided a basis for knowledge-building and credibility. One teaching school (2) stated that working with universities developed 'a sense of worth in the intellectual capital of teachers. Sometimes (1 and 3), where links to HEIs were more established, there was evidence of working jointly to develop resources, for example an early years language toolkit. In some cases, the partnership with HEIs consisted of an evaluative and measuring role (3) and as providing 'rigour and challenge' (16).

Where leadership was very confident, this was often signalled by links between research knowledge and developing networks. Examples of this included: hosting an annual multidisciplinary research conference (1), developing postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE) and foundation degree (FdA) routes in collaboration with an HEI provider (6, 19); and designing research focused on teacher/ practitioner agency (14). In one teaching school (10), research was underpinned by a belief that 'learning is an iterative and circular process' which led to an action research project which was informed by collaborative knowledge-building. One teaching school (16) also connected the idea of social capital with 'developing a system to ensure evaluation and challenge'.

Despite evidence that developing research knowledge was both new and desirable for many teaching schools, it was notable that only one (7) considered creating a research post and it was relatively unusual for teaching schools to discuss how they were going to approach action research in terms of a methodological approach to research. One stated approach (3) was the 'lesson study collaborative research approach' which involved a knowledge creation workshop. This teaching school demonstrated awareness of the benefits of a structured approach to carrying out the research.

**Kyra Teaching School Alliance** has placed emphasis on an open approach to enquiry: 'We would like to test a model based on research already undertaken in our Alliance with teachers. The research demonstrated the impact of a systematic approach to JPD, where the assumption is that learning is an iterative and circular process..... This is a dynamic model in the sense that the goal is not some fixed picture but something which keeps on developing as the process proceeds'.

The baseline score often reflected the challenges of the collaborative capital dimension. The mean score for this dimension was lower than for the other two dimensions and in 17 of the 19 teaching schools who completed the baseline score information, collaborative capital was seen as the most challenging aspect for developing early years leaders. Only four teaching schools (6, 17, 11, and 14) rated their collaborative dimension as developing to embedding. However, most school rated themselves as 'beginning' to 'developing' in most categories (see A2) which could be said to be an inevitable feature of such an audit system at the start of a new project.

Hargreaves (2012) states that collaborative capital cannot grow independently; it comes only out of the roots of the interaction of the strands of professional development and partnership competence. Thus 'intellectual capital', a feature of collaborative capital, is reliant on building the social capital entailed in the trust and reciprocity of authentic partnerships. The role of system leadership as 'organisational capital' is to harness intellectual and social strengths built through partnership. 'Collective intellectual capital' (Hargreaves, 2012) is the extension of such partnerships and where the teaching schools in the project had partnerships including the contribution of HEIs, this added confidence to their leadership and network planning for action research.

The baseline information provided plans for a wide range of different action research projects which involved network building, dissemination of knowledge and joint learning. The model for network-building and/or hub-creation was one aspect that merited more attention in several cases. In many cases the foci of the projects were defined by policy demands. In one case (13), there was evidence that previous projects supported by the DfE could provide examples of action research but in some cases, the project plans needed further definition and rigour, to move to the next stage of development. Eight teaching schools (1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 14, 16, and 19) had designed action research that primarily concentrated on building networks. In some cases this aimed at network building to achieve a common policy on issues such as school readiness and speech and language difficulty (1, 5 and 7).

**Everton Nursery and Family Centre** has placed emphasis on combining research with network building and policy issue. They plan: 'to encourage and foster a culture of enquiry and focus on developing a model of high quality practice development across the early years sector including maintained nursery schools and nursery classes, private and voluntary settings and children's centres within Liverpool (linking to the Mayor's Education Commission) and neighbouring local authorities including Knowsley, St. Helen's, Sefton and Wirral. The aim is to create a network through the early years hub model with a focus on common themes such as transitions and school readiness'.

Action research is a useful way to foster equitable collaboration between partners (Baumfield et al., 2013; MacNaughton, 2012; Burns, 2007). The 'Joint Practice Development' (JPD) that Hargreaves (2012) defines as the first strand of the professional development dimension requires a built in dissemination system linked to evaluation and high degrees of social capital, if it is to be successfully shared. This allows knowledge and skills to become a 'collective good' (Hargreaves, 2012, 30). In this project, action research has been used as a tool to bring networks together to share and create knowledge. Some of the more developed plans for action research were focused on the process of building a network (see example above). These plans cohere better with the features of a mature self-improving system leadership and are therefore more likely to generate the knowledge needed to improve practice. Whilst a focus is useful, too much focus on an instrumental goal or outcome might be counter-productive to the process of theory building.

## **Models of Continuing Professional Development (CPD)**

The last section showed that teaching schools frequently expressed an aspiration to use and gain further knowledge to improve practice and build secure networks. This aspiration was frequently embodied by experience of leading CPD within the networks and plans to develop this further. Developing JPD implies that teachers prioritise the sharing of practice, rather than solely the implementation of policy (Hargreaves, 2012). Where teaching schools managed to prioritise a focus on network building and combine this with both research knowledge and features of policy implementation, the action research plans were more in line with Hargreaves' (2012) maturity model.

Some teaching schools (14, 16 and 19) demonstrated awareness in their action research plans of the importance of professional development for network building. This was evident through a focus on teacher/practitioner agency to enable the growth of reflective enquiry. These teaching schools prioritised sharing both research

and practice. Siraj-Blatchford and Sum (2013, 17) recognise that professional reflection is a vital attribute for practitioners to 'consider actual against intended outcomes'. These projects all clearly adopted a robust approach to equitable sharing of practice, in line with the development of a collective moral purpose.

Hargreaves identifies collective moral purpose as a key enabling condition for partnership competence. At a systems level, this entails an effort by individual schools to overcome the competitive elements generated by performance data. This means that systems leaders should also work for success for other schools and share opportunities for leadership. However, a deep partnership implies that 'everyone has something to teach and something to learn' (Hargreaves, 2012, 16). In effect, JPD needs to be addressed internally by an organisation before that organisation can lead a network.

**Education Teaching Alliance Lewisham** emphasise listening to concerns: 'We are active in a number of existing EY partnerships and networks, led by the needs and interests of the practitioners themselves'. They want to 'develop trusting relationships between school and childminders, to share practice, develop expertise, target training at needs and interests, support the expansion of quality provision for two year olds for the benefit of children and families'.

Other models of CPD that were adopted in the action research project plans showed evidence of confident leadership in terms of wider experience and knowledge of policy than partners. These projects (3 and 11) focused on the dissemination of practitioner knowledge, for example of the Characteristics of Learning in Development Matters (DfE 2012) and more generally, children's speech and communication skills. However, to develop these further, it would be helpful for these plans to address how partners' perspectives would be investigated.

There was strong evidence in the baseline information, often led by policy imperatives, that the teaching schools viewed themselves as natural providers of CPD and assumed a training role. Baseline information from teaching schools often outlined several areas for development in the workforce which projects set out to address. One project (4) identified that newly qualified Level 3 staff had 'insufficient understanding of how early years children learn' and in a few projects (9, 15), there were perceived difficulties with transitions involving the PVI sector. School readiness was often identified as a rationale for the development of practice across range of settings (1, 5, 12, 13, 15, and 17). One project with a particular focus on school

readiness planned to target 'pupil premium children' and another planned a focus on children who were seen as unprepared for school.

Where projects were based on negative assumptions, they risk confusing action research with a model of CPD that emphasises a knowledge transmission or transfer model. The dominance of centralised early years and education policy can lead schools to unconsciously echo and reinforce the assumptions or deficits behind policy formation (Miller and Hevey, 2012). To create the evidence needed for building networks for local improvement, an open approach to enquiry and network building would better support the aspirations that were expressed in the action research plans and which Hargreaves (2012) expresses as 'collective moral purpose'. Although coaching and mentoring are features within the JPD, these are conceptualised as part of a 'continuous, pervasive process that builds craft knowledge' and the 'mutual influence' of partners (Hargreaves, 2012, 8).

Some projects (9, 13 and 18) run the risk of creating unequal relations between practitioner from the lead school and practitioner in the network and other projects risk creating unequal relationships between practitioners and parents (7) or practitioner and children (15). This risk arises when there is a focus on a deficit model of practice or ability which suggests a transfer of practice or knowledge is needed rather than creating the sense of development that informs a JPD relationship. Where projects were focused more on the type of network or the means of communication needed to build the network, JPD was able to inform a mentoring and coaching model in a more positive way.

**Redcliffe Children's Centre and Nursery School** (part of the Bristol early years network) emphasise network study through: 'a research/CPD/network group with representatives from each sector to include an initial steering group that would coordinate findings.....This is a starting point we are already using in collaboration with our HE and LA partners to develop an early years research website monitored and evaluated by the steering group'.

As outlined in the last section, some of the action research projects focused strongly on a key government policy as a route for local network building. For example, teaching schools focused on speech and language (7), boys' literacy (10) and assessment issues (9, 18). As already mentioned, there was strong emphasis on characteristics of effective learning, transitions and school readiness. In line with these demands, there was evidence that raising quality was driving the concerns of many of the teaching schools. Improvements in quality were often tackled by the

design of a 'toolkit' aimed to address issues such as the identification of children and families who need support (2) and early years language development (1, 7 and 11). One teaching school (20) is aiming to produce a diagnostic leadership tool.

Familiarisation with policy also brings with it the use of a common professional terminology and language. 'Narrowing/closing the gap' was frequently referred to, along with the more recent language of 'accessibility and affordability'. One teaching school (2) has made shared language the aim of their research. Whilst this is to develop staff confidence, this project will need to ensure that it does not mirror a deficit-competence relation between the lead school and other network partners. Whilst policy can provide a common focus for activities, it is also vital to attend to the growth of the network in the way envisaged by the maturity model. It is also worth noting that although a toolkit is a useful asset for training, it must support rather than replace the emphasis on generating new knowledge through JPD.

**Camden Primary Partnership** emphasise a focus on practitioners as well as a shared understanding of policy: 'Our aims are to improve outcomes for both children and adults by supporting early years practitioners in the effective implementation of the EYFS. Specific aims are to:

- Increase practitioners' understanding of and confidence in using the newly introduced Characteristics of Effective Learning
- Enhance early years practitioners' teaching skills, particularly in promoting children's 'creating and thinking critically'
- Develop a sustainable model of practitioner development and partnership which will support children's learning.'

## **Evidence of networking practices**

Evidence showed that in some cases (1, 14) membership of existing networks developed by the teaching schools extended from local to national and, in one case, international. One of the teaching schools (5) was a member of a network of teaching schools and a local leadership group. Some teaching schools showed evidence of a high level of existing work with early years providers (6, 13, and 16) and in one case (9), there were plans to appoint three new early years specialist teachers. Another teaching school (6) focused on building a network for child minders which was initiated by concerns raised by them.



Frequently, working in triads was seen as an effective way to establish good JPD (10 and 18). This was particularly useful where teaching schools were concerned with moderation of assessment practices or developing a specific area of practice such as literacy outcomes for boys. However, in some cases, there was an identified need for building trust before this sort of joint work could flourish.

**Shepway Teaching School Alliance** emphasise JPD for building trust: 'Our focus will be on joint practice development, building social capital, ensuring we all have an agreed collective moral purpose. Developing a system to ensure evaluation and challenge.....We have selected this area because our research to date has evidenced that there is a real reluctance and sadly a lack of trust between settings, schools, childminders to share best practice, creating a barrier to joint practice development. Our aim is to break down these barriers'.

One teaching school (5) pointed to the specific need to strengthen partnership between school and early years providers. Another teaching school (8) was regularly updated by the LA early years team but thought that this needed development. Another teaching school (12) talked about the need for smaller cluster groups to meet together to complement the large early years cluster meetings driven by the LA. Thus to develop successful networks, early years providers were often identified as in need of more opportunities to be heard. Working in clusters can reduce administration and streamline opportunities to share specialisms (Siraj-Blatchford and Sum, 2013) but it needs to be designed to be equitable.

Of the 20 teaching schools, 13 are led by primary schools. This means that early years providers are heavily reliant on school-led systems to disseminate early years expertise and knowledge. It is important in this climate of schools leading improvement in early years settings to make sure that there is shared ownership of the emerging network. Siraj-Blatchford and Sum, 2013 explain that the binding force for the different components of a system has to go beyond interaction and communication to shared purpose and direction. Thus systems are interrelated and 'whatever is done in one part of the system will have an impact on another part at the same or different level' (p.11).

Networks were more challenged in rural areas (7, 17 and 20) where provision is more geographically widespread. One teaching school (7) stated that they are the sole nursery school in the county and another said that it had limited access to the nearest Children's Centre. This means that systems of communication and the logistics of meeting need particular attention to counteract a sense of isolation and share experiences. In these areas, leadership was identified as particularly

important. Hargreaves (2012) states that both a diagnostic and an innovation system are needed to develop disciplined innovators. However, embedding innovation could be a particular challenge where one school is identified as a lead for an entire county and is perceived to be too distant to lend support. Developing more local leaders could address this.

**Woolacombe National Support and Teaching School** emphasise identifying and developing leaders: 'The Alliance will prioritise the development of inspirational leaders who provide excellent role models, ensuring that staff within early years settings are highly focused on quality care, learning and development.'

## Patterns of confident systems leadership

Confident leadership was exemplified by projects that were realistically framed. This was demonstrated by awareness of the infrastructure needed to sustain a developing hub. In some cases (6 and 17), there was evidence of appropriation of the project as a way of continuing and nurturing existing priorities. Sometimes this existing agenda was clearly in harmony with the aims of the project to develop regional networks and sometimes this was not so clear.

Very confident leadership demonstrated openness to new ideas through systems to share communication. It remains to be seen where this will lead and how potential differences of opinion will be managed but Siraj-Blatchford and Sum (2013) suggest that language can be crucial to leadership, and help to frame challenges in positive ways. Awareness of how language is used can transform concepts such as complaint and blame to those of commitment and responsibility.

**Forest Way Teaching School Alliance** emphasise communication. They are aiming for: 'engagement of the full spectrum of EYFS providers from 0-5 years.....investigating the best means of communication between settings and then setting up communication systems across all providers'.

One of the main challenges for confident leaders is dealing with fragmentation in a positive way and the aim to build consistency was cited frequently (17). One teaching school (1) discussed the ethos of distributed leadership (Harris, 2014) which is supported by an experienced team. As expected, many of the teaching schools demonstrated experience of leadership but it was those that were willing to

listen to and appreciate the potential contributions of other network members that showed most confidence in a distributed approach to leading. One teaching school (10) emphasised that there was 'untapped talent' within the sector and another (13) said that they would 'show respect and give time to build trust as a foundation of communications, collecting, sharing and using data to systematically drive up improvements'. One teaching school (19) also talked about sharing evidence with other teaching schools to contribute to a national picture of 'knowledge of effective early years practice'.

**Tyne Valley Teaching School Alliance** emphasise a specialist cluster model: Our evidence shows that we are able to encourage and engage colleagues in a culture of enquiry that offers opportunities for professional dialogue, joint training and practice development; that we are able to support the main objectives of this initiative in a systematic and coherent way using our specialist cluster models to provide support and challenge and identify and deliver effective CPD.

Finally, it is clear that leadership of a system which is both geographically and culturally diverse needs solid and responsive structures for organisation and management. One teaching school (14) mentioned the use of a steering group to enable potentially disparate structures to function. This emphasises the need for teaching schools to investigate the use of different model of network and/or hub. Siraj-Blatchford and Sum (2013) suggest that structural deficiencies often lead to poor coordination of the dynamics of the interaction between groups. Thus, communication in itself is not enough, and organisation needs to be developed to support sustainable systems leadership. Steering groups, therefore, may be a way forward but will need to reflect the interests of the all the partners in the network and have real authority and influence over decisions. However, until all partners have a clear idea of the model which informs the operation of the network, it will be hard to make sustainable progress.

# **INTERIM RECOMMENDATIONS and NEXT STEPS**

## **Teaching schools to:**

1. Link with HEIs and wider national and international networks to utilise their knowledge in research training. HEIs should be seen as partners, as well as offering facilitative and research support.
2. Focus on research as development and recognise a need for a supportive environment for research where a culture of enquiry is nurtured and valued.
3. Explore a shared understanding of the model used to inform network-building for the purpose of local improvement
4. Provide support to enable networks to move beyond a 'training needs analysis' approach to systemic action research which is generative of reflection and new enquiry
5. Create a built-in dissemination system to project work so that projects focus on developing communication as well as demonstrating it.
6. Consider how to include early years providers in an equitable way through responsive communication and management systems.
7. Develop ways to identify, sustain and nurture leadership potential so that leaders are supported in rural areas at a local level.
8. Organise representative and democratic steering groups for future work that have meaningful decision-making authority invested in them.

## **Projects to:**

1. Adopt a principle of which focuses on the value of action research as a means for collective analysis and enquiry.
2. Focus primarily on building trust and the features of successful network-building to avoid conceptualising deficit in partners.
3. Explore and inform the best model for local network-building with reference to successful examples of hub and cluster models.
4. Focus on teacher/practitioner agency to enable the growth of reflective enquiry and opportunities for sharing of practices.
5. Create a shared understanding of policy as a common theme which both aim to reflect and inform policy or in some cases constructively challenge it.

6. Develop and communicate existing work and strengths enabling opportunities to reframe expertise for the purpose of successful network-building.

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# A1

## List of Participants Teaching Schools

- Bradford Birth to 19 Teaching School Alliance, Bradford
- Camden Primary Partnership, London
- Carmel Teaching School Alliance, Darlington
- Chelwood Nursery School, Lewisham
- Cotgrave Candleby Lane Teaching School, Nottingham
- Everton Nursery School and Family Centre, lead school for the North Liverpool teaching School Partnership, Liverpool and National Co-ordinator for the Early Years Hubs research project
- Highfield Nursery School, part of Farlingaye and Kesgrave Teaching School Alliance, Ipswich
- Forest Way Teaching School Alliance, Leicester
- Severn Teaching School Alliance, Telford
- Kyra Teaching School, Lincoln
- Portsmouth Teaching School Alliance, Portsmouth
- St Theresa's, Bolton with Prestolee Teaching School, Manchester
- Kendal Nursery School and Hindpool Nursery School part of Queen Katherine Teaching School Alliance, Cumbria
- Redcliffe Children's Centre and Nursery School, part of Bristol Early Years Teaching School Partnership, Bristol
- Robert Wilkinson Primary Academy, York
- Shepway Teaching School Alliance, Folkestone
- St. Mark's Teaching School Alliance, East Sussex
- Tyne Valley Teaching School Alliance, Hexham
- Whitefield Teaching School Alliance, London
- Woolacombe National Support and Teaching School, Woolacombe, Devon

## A2

### Baseline Score of Maturity

- Bradford Birth to 19 Teaching School Alliance - 1
- Camden Primary Partnership - 1
- Carmel Teaching School Alliance -1
- Chelwood Nursery School- 1
- Cotgrave Candleby Lane Teaching School - 1
- Everton Nursery School and Family Centre - 1
- Highfield Nursery School, part of Farlingaye and Kesgrave Teaching School Alliance - 2
- Forest Way Teaching School Alliance - 1
- Severn Teaching School Alliance - 1
- Kyra Teaching School - 1
- Portsmouth Teaching School Alliance - 2
- St Theresa's. Bolton with Prestolee Teaching School - 1
- Kendal Nursery School and Hindpool Nursery School part of Queen Katherine Teaching School Alliance - 2
- Redcliffe Children's Centre and Nursery School, part of Bristol Early Years Teaching School Partnership - 3
- Robert Wilkinson Primary Academy - 1
- Shepway Teaching School Alliance - 1
- St. Mark's Teaching School Alliance - 2
- Tyne Valley Teaching School Alliance - 1
- Whitefield Teaching School Alliance - 1
- Woolacombe National Support and Teaching School - 2

# A3

## Baseline Information Proforma

### SUMMER TERM 2014: BASELINE INFORMATION

Contact information	
Name and School / Teaching School Alliance	

2014 Early Years Hub Action research focus	
What will be the focus of your action research during the summer term 2014?	
Brief reasons why you have selected this area.	
How will you establish a baseline and assess the impact of the project?	
What do you consider will be the benefits and impact of your research?	



## A4

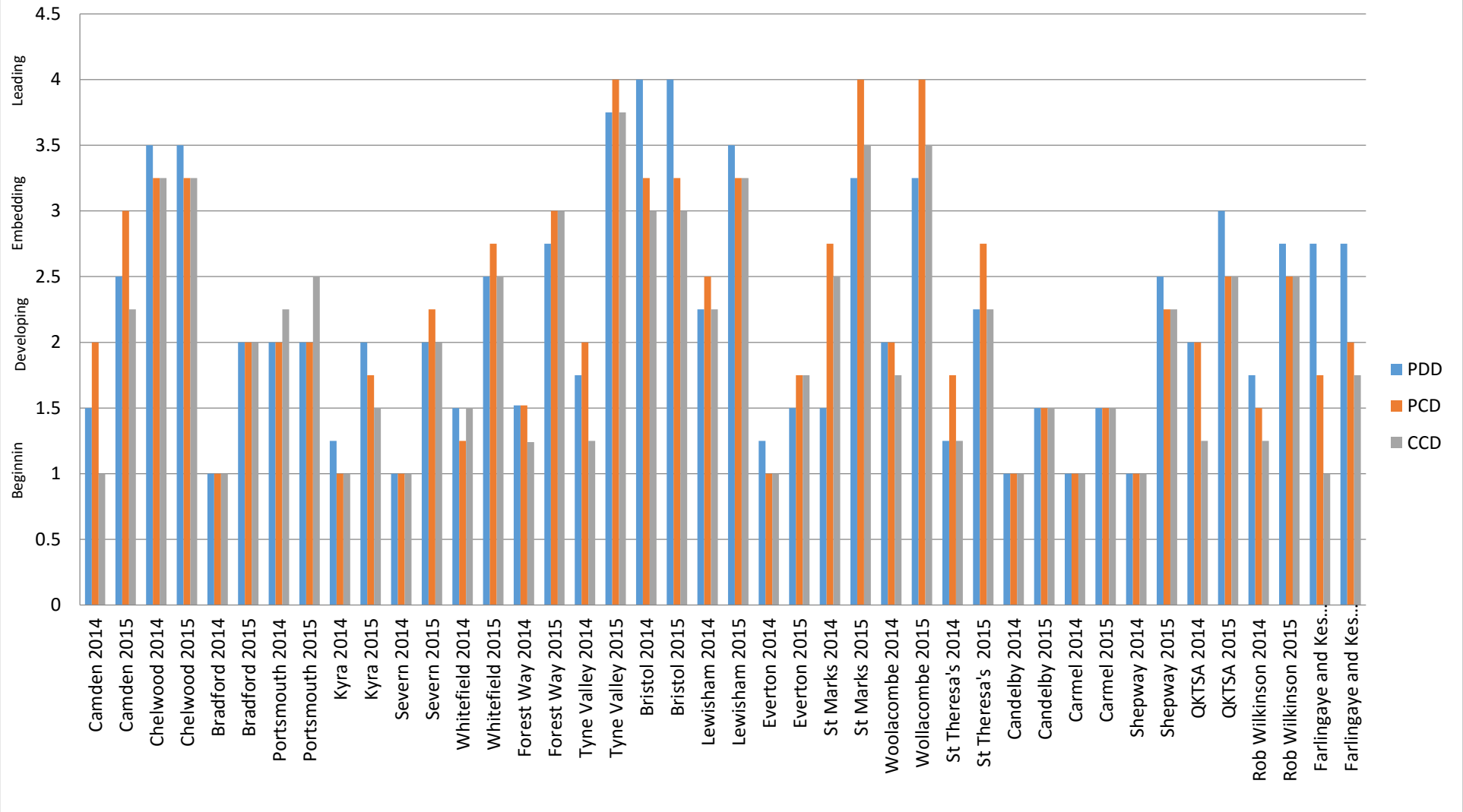
### Interview Questions

1. What influenced your original bid?
2. Has your original bid evolved? If so – how and why?
3. What are you hoping to achieve through engaging within this process that you have identified?
4. What difference is it going to make, or do you hope it makes, on:
  - children's learning;
  - parental engagement; and,
  - staff professional development?
5. Who have you involved – please identify?
6. What percentage/numbers approximately are schools, PVI's, Childminders, Children Centre's or any other key strategic partner? How were these identified?
7. With the engagement of the above group/s – are you now considering broadening your Teaching School Alliance to involve these partners/settings more long term?
8. How have you engaged with your local authority?
9. How have you engaged with your local Children's Centre or other key strategic partners?
10. What do you consider have been the blockers and enablers so far? How have you mitigated these?
11. How are you going to transition this research project into sustainable Early Years practice, i.e. how will you create a legacy for continued work?



## Appendix 2

### Early Years Leadership Evaluation Diagnostic (NCTL, 2013)



## Appendix 3

### Names of participant Teaching School Alliances (TSAs)

Code Number	Teaching School Alliance (TSA)	Name of school/s
1	North Liverpool Teaching School Partnership	Everton Nursery School and Family Centre
2	Bradford Birth to 19 TSA	St Edmunds Nursery School and Children's Centre
3	Camden Primary Partnership TSA	Eleanor Palmer Primary School and Thomas Coram Early Years Centre
4	The Candleby Lane TSA	Cotgrave Candleby Lane Primary School
5	Carmel TSA	George Dent Nursery School and Carmel College
6	South Thames Early Education Partnership (STEEP) TSA	Chelwood Nursery School
7	Farlingaye and Kesgrave TSA	Highfield Nursery School and Children's Centre
8	Forest Way TSA	Forest Way School
9	Severn TSA	John Fletcher of Madeley Primary School/Lilleshall Primary School
10	Kyra TSA	Mount Street Academy/The Priory Witham Academy
11	Portsmouth TSA	Highbury Primary School and Nursery/The Willows Centre for Children.
12	Prestolee TSA	St Teresa's Catholic Primary School
13	Queen Katherine TSA	Kendal Nursery School and Hindpool Nursery School
14	Bristol Early Years Teaching Consortium TSA	Redcliffe Nursery School and Children's Centre
15	Ebor TSA	Carr Infant School and Robert Wilkinson Primary Academy
16	Shepway TSA	Shepway Teaching School Alliance
17	St Mark's TSA	St Mark's C of E Primary School
18	Tyne Valley TSA	Sele First School
19	Whitefield TSA	Whitefield Teaching School Alliance
20	Woolacombe TSA	East The Water Primary School/Woolacombe Primary school

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