

Case Study: Promoting the funded two-year-old early years education offer through Fantastic Twos parent and child sessions

- Fantastic Twos is a practitioner-led, EYFS focussed programme of six sessions to encourage take-up of the funded two-year-old early years education offer. It is also aimed at preparing children for nursery and encouraging home learning.
- The sessions were run in children's centres and workshops were run for practitioners to ensure consistency of delivery across the centres.
- Unlike stay and play groups, the parents and their children stayed throughout the sessions (instead of being free to join and leave the session at any time).
- Pre Covid-19, 80% of parents who attended took up a funded two-year-old early years education place for their child.

Introduction

As part of the Wandle Early Years Hub drive to increase take-up of the funded two-year-old early years education offer, especially by parents who might be reluctant to do so, the Hub ran Fantastic Twos sessions in their children's centres for eligible parents.

The programme aimed to:

- prepare children and families for the transition to, and to help children be ready for, nursery
- identify children in need of additional support
- ensure children make good rates of progress
- help parents to experience a nursery education-like provision and understand what 'teaching' looks like and how their child responds.

The sessions ran for 90 minutes and unlike a stay and play session, children came with their parent/carer at the start time and stayed until the end. At stay and play sessions parents are free to join and leave with their children at any time. Attendance was by invitation or referral only.

It ran as a six week block and children were encouraged to attend all six sessions of at least one block, but preferably two. The focus was on teaching, with practitioners concentrating on the child not the parent. There was a structured routine in the session and over the block of six.

Parents received:

- Parent information pack

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- All about me (a tool used in early years to give children the opportunity to tell teachers about themselves)
- Learning journey book
- Book folder and reading record
- 'What to Expect When' pamphlet.

The Hub wanted to ensure that there was consistency in delivery across the different children's centres and, to this end, delivered workshops to practitioners before and during the lifetime of the programme.

Expectations of practitioners

Undertake detailed planning, for instance to:

- ensure the focus was on prime areas of learning
- promote children undertaking activities in pairs
- create choice in each activity to promote language for thinking
- understand the role and purpose of snack time
- understand the role and purpose of story time.

The practitioners were also tasked with ongoing assessment of the children's progress using their own and parents'/carers' knowledge and observations. From the assessments, plans for next steps were made and comparisons undertaken between the two blocks to assess progress.

The delivery was interrupted by the lockdown in March 2020 as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, and was resumed at a reduced level in the 2020 autumn term. It had been showing some very encouraging success. Data collected in 2019 showed that 80% of parents who had attended subsequently accessed a funded early education place for their child.

Parents also fed back very positively about the experience and its impact on them and their child.

"Fantastic Twos was good for giving me ideas to do at home. I liked the activities [and] my child became more independent and more confident. I was more at ease and relaxed because you know what they'll be doing [at nursery]. It helped him to sit for stories and songs which I learnt that they'd do at nursery. The structure helped getting him ready for nursery."

"It encouraged her speech and language and interaction with others her age. She formed friendships there which she carried on at nursery. I met parents that went on to nursery. I recognised parents which really helped. It helped her to sit at the table and join in with a snack and communicating more. I could see that nursery would be good for her."

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