School of Life Sciences and Education

FINAL REPORT
to

Stoke-on-Trent Opportunity Area Programme Improving Outcomes for Early Years

'Understanding the World – Area of Learning'
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1. Introduction

Scope of the research:
This is a Stoke-on-Trent Opportunity Area funded project. The Opportunity Area Programme seeks to improve social mobility for children and young people, to break the link between social background and destination. Stoke-on-Trent is one of 12 areas selected for additional support from the DfE, working through a partnership of local leaders. The project relates to improving outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) to give children the best possible start in life and learning. Data shows that only 71% of pupils achieve or exceed the expected standard against the Understanding the World Area of Learning which incorporates three Early Learning Goals (ELGs). Children in the most deprived wards are least likely to achieve the standard. Statistical data in Table 1 gives an overview of the Ofsted ratings in relation to the providers associated with the audit.

Table 1: Statistics for Stoke-on-Trent (Watchsted, 2018)

Primary Stoke-on-Trent is 86/162 in the national Ofsted primary provision	90% good and outstanding across 69 primary schools 10% requires improvement
Nursery Schools	6 nurseries all good and outstanding
Non-domestic childcare	9 outstanding, 44 good across 56 inspection reports since 2015

This audit explores the Understanding the World Area of Learning (EE, 2012) inclusive of three ELGs:

People and Communities ELG13:

Children talk about past and present events in their own lives and in the lives of family members. They know that other children don't always enjoy the same things, and are sensitive to this. They know about similarities and differences between themselves and others, and among families, communities and traditions.

The World ELG14:

> Children know about similarities and differences in relation to places, objects, materials and living things. They talk about the features of their own immediate environment and how environments might vary from one another. They make observations of animals and plants and explain why some things occur, and talk about changes.

Technology ELG15:

> Children recognise that a range of technology is used in places such as homes and schools. They select and use technology for particular purposes.

Aim of the research:

The research was an audit of local best practice in early years settings to support children in the Understanding the World Area of Learning. Primarily, the research aimed to investigate practitioners' understanding and teaching delivery, and the progress and attainment of children within the Understanding the World Area of Learning and to identify best practice examples, features of effective provision and barriers to child progression and attainment of the three ELGs. The research findings will enable the Opportunity Area Programme to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences and perceptions of early years practitioners' working in a range of early years settings.

Research questions:

The research was driven by three broad questions within its overarching aim of capturing early years practitioners' experiences of the Understanding the World Area of Learning:

1. In terms of practice and pedagogy, what features of best practice can be identified?

2. What features contribute to effective provision regarding the settings' understanding, teaching delivery and progression and attainment of children towards the Understanding the World Early Learning Goals?

3. What, if any, are the challenges and barriers to children attaining the Understanding the World Early Learning Goals?

2. Research methodology

Approach

Ethical approval to conduct this research was granted by Staffordshire University's Ethics Committee. The research also adhered to the Ethics Guidelines produced by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011). Participant information sheets and consent forms were designed and distributed to settings via email. A list of local providers was made available by Stoke-on-Trent Local Authority; 74 nurseries and 70 primary schools. The research adopted a mixed methods approach comprising a survey and semi-structured interviews. The online questionnaire was developed and made available to practitioners in schools and nurseries from Monday 9 April 2018 and was ongoing until Friday 27 April 2018. Reminder emails were sent to encourage further uptake of the survey. An interview schedule was developed, settings were contacted by email and telephone to set up the interviews at convenient times. The interviews commenced on Wednesday 18 April 2018.

Data collection:
Sample

The project focused on practitioners in a range of EYFS 1 and EYFS 2 settings where good and outstanding results are achieved for the city's disadvantaged children. The survey information was distributed, via the Local Authority Early Years and school lead officers, to 74 early years settings and 70 school-based settings. Following a limited response from providers for both the survey and participation in the interviews a further call to respond was communicated via Staffordshire University (the Research Institute) using a database of current providers in nursery and school settings. This database contained named contacts in the areas being audited and this approach was felt to be a more targeted approach to gain direct access to providers.

Fifteen LA primary schools, 6 academy schools and 7 nurseries were contacted with view to arranging interviews with early years practitioners in 4 nurseries and 4 primary schools. An initial email, a follow-up email and a follow-up phone call were made in order to seek access to early years practitioners. This was a challenging process where there was some resistance due to the timing of the request for information and also there was not the opportunity for the researchers to establish a relationship with the setting prior to conducting the research. Initially, none of the primary schools approached responded to emails, phone calls or the LA's bulletin to participate. One primary school responded to the call for the online questionnaire and offered an interview, however, despite responding to a few queries they decided not to participate due to time constraints. Of the four primary schools in the sample, 2 are LA primary and 2 are academies. Five nurseries responded, although one later declined, four interviews were undertaken. The sample is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Overview of sample

Survey = n:24	Role	Number
Schools	Head Teacher	4
	Deputy Head	1
	EYFS lead/teacher/assistant head (primary)	14 (2 SENCO)
Nurseries	Nursery Manager	4 (2 SENCO)
	Key Person	1
Removed from data set	Unknown	1
	Admin Assistant	1
	Incomplete response	6
Location of settings: ST codes: 12; 14; 20; 28; 29; 31; 34; 36; 37; 38; 42; 44; 45; 46; 62; 65; 66; 67; 87		
Communication for Interviews: Additional emails 43, telephone calls 22		
Interview = n:8	Role	Number
Participants	Nursery Manager	2
	Nursery Deputy Manager	2
	Early Years Lead	4

The datasets were cleaned by removing incomplete and unreliable responses. One of these roles highlighted the participant was not associated with delivery (administrative assistant). Another provided misleading data – i.e. no examples of practice, did not want to be identified. A further six recorded an incomplete response within the time available. A clean dataset enabled the statistics and narrative to reflect those working in the sector and facilitate a more accurate portrayal of the project audit.

Research tools design and analysis

Seventeen questions were designed for the online survey. The survey comprised a mix of question types; some closed/nominal questions, some multiple choice and some questions using a Likert scale. Respondents were asked to comment on all three ELGs within the Understanding the World Area of Learning in relation to areas of best practice, features of effective provision and challenges and barriers to progression and attainment. These questions generated quantitative data to calculate simple statistics (frequencies) as relevant. The survey also contained some open questions to generate qualitative responses. The qualitative responses were analysed with the interview data.

A set of 8 questions were developed for the interview schedule. These questions focused on exploring in greater depth and detail with practitioners' examples of best practice, effective provision and challenges and barriers to children's progression and attainment. Interviews were carried out to further explore what these features included and how providers' initial training and continuous training aided their delivery of Understanding the World to influence children's progress and attainment. Each

interview was then transcribed, and the data were analysed by three of the researchers in the team.

3. Findings

The research findings from desk-based research and empirical data collection are presented in this section. The Early Years Foundation Stage Profile data (EYFSP, 2016/2017) from Stoke-on-Trent is presented first and was drawn upon to provide a context for the empirical data collected. Then, each of the three goals namely People and Communities (ELG13), The World (ELG14) and Technology (ELG15) is discussed in turn in relation to identifying and describing features of best practice and effective provision in the city. Finally, what practitioners regard as the key challenges and barriers to children's progression and attainment is presented.

Measures of impact and any existing evidence of impact
This section provides discussion and analysis of data describing attainment data for all Stoke schools. This data is representative of 70 schools which cover 37 wards. The data shows a breakdown by school and ward against pupil characteristics – e.g. SEN, BAME etc. The data has been collated in Table 3 to show attainment by student characteristics to provide an overview of student performance against each ELG within the Understanding the World Area of Learning.

Table 3: Data showing attainment of each ELG against each pupil characteristic

| | | 2016 | | | | | | 2017 | | | | | | |
| | | All pupils | | | | | | All pupils | | | | | | |
A	Number of pupils	Expected+ UTW ELG 13	Exceeding UTW ELG 13	Expected+ UTW ELG 14	Exceeding UTW ELG 14	Expected+ UTW ELG 15	Exceeding UTW ELG 15	Number of pupils	Expected+ UTW ELG 13	Exceeding UTW ELG 13	Expected+ UTW ELG 14	Exceeding UTW ELG 14	Expected+ UTW ELG 15	Exceeding UTW ELG 15
All	3,433	2,576	453	2,584	471	2,868	508	3,366	2,555	439	2,560	455	2,842	537
%	100	75	13	75	14	78	15	3366	76	13	76	14	84	16
Non SEN	3,012	81	15	81	15	88	16	2,892	83	15	83	16	90	18
SEN	421	30	1	31	1	52	3	474	30	1	32	1	52	5
English	2,681	79	15	79	15	87	17	2,622	80	15	80	16	87	17
EAL	685	59	7	59	7	71	9	732	62	7	62	6	75	11
Boys	1,701	69	10	70	11	81	14	1,717	70	10	70	11	81	14
Girls	1,732	81	17	80	17	86	15	1,649	82	17	82	16	88	18
White Brit	2,397	79	15	79	16	87	16	2,275	81	15	81	16	88	18
BAME	998	65	10	66	9	75	11	1,050	67	9	67	8	78	12
Non FSM	2,634	77	15	77	15	85	16	2,642	79	15	79	16	86	18
FSM	799	70	8	70	9	80	12	724	66	6	67	6	79	10
Non PP	2,494	77	15	77	15	85	16	2,749	78	15	78	15	85	17
PP	939	71	8	71	10	80	11	887	69	8	70	9	82	12
AVERAGE		70	11	70	12	80	13		71	11	71	11	81	14
STDEV		14	5	14	5	10	4		15	5	14	5	10	4

The data show that overall performance has marginally increased in each of the ELGs between 2016 and 2017 reported data. Pupils attain most successfully within Technology (ELG15), especially in 2017. People and Communities (ELG13) and The

World (ELG14) show lower levels of attainment in both 2016 and 2017. The highlighted sections in Table 3 indicate occurrences where groups of pupils' attainment is 10% lower than the overall percentage. For example, in 2016 the whole sample showed 75% of pupils met or exceeded age related expectations for ELG13 (see C5 in Table 3). In the same year, only 30% of SEN pupils met or exceeded age related expectations (see C7 in Table 3). Drawing upon the highlighted sections, in both 2016 and 2017 the EAL pupil population's attainment was more than 10% lower than the whole student body in both ELG13 and ELG14. BAME students did not perform as well in ELG13 in 2016. Both EAL and BAME pupil performance (compared to all pupil) has improved in 2017. In 2017, with the exception of SEN and EAL pupils, only pupils entitled to FSM were 10% lower than all students within ELG13. This provides evidence that these groups – BAME, FSM and EAL – show lower attainment in ELG13 and ELG14, but their attainment in ELG15 is much closer to that of all pupils. The data shows that the group of pupils with the lower performing data is those identified as SEN. In each ELG and in both 2016 and 2017 the difference between the SEN pupils and all pupils is over 30%.

The data could be interpreted to show evidence that ELG13 and ELG14 have a greater reliance on language skills, in comparison to ELG15. Given that attainment in ELG13 and ELG14 is consistently lower for EAL pupils in 2016 and 2017, the data may also show that pupils who may have spent their early years within different cultures within the UK or abroad, find concepts of 'community' and 'the world' hard to grasp. SEN pupils are by far the lowest attaining group of all pupils. Whilst this group may include pupils also categorised in other characteristics – e.g. EAL, FSM; the SEN group show significantly lower performance in all areas. However, for SEN pupils, ELG15 shows a much higher (20%) attainment rate compared to ELG13 and ELG14. This would indicate that the platform of technology supports attainment for this group. However, while recognising this connection, the empirical data suggests the relationship between technology and pupil outcomes is more complex.

Identification of outstanding practice: achieving excellence
Providers were asked to share examples of best practice and effective provision in their setting in the three ELGs giving a range of examples where provision could demonstrate enhanced provision. Across all ELGs providers spoke about being proactive in arranging learning experiences and how passionate they were in ensuring that the children had the best opportunities available for "children to thrive" in nursery and school.

3.1 People and Communities ELG13

Best practice aids progression and attainment through:

- Secure and consistent links with community organisations

- Participation of family members in the setting through sharing professional and cultural practices
- Instilling a sense of community through connections with others and how to be part of a responsible and valued social network that promotes positive behaviours

Best practice was described by providers as, "…bridging the gap between nursery and home…" (Nursery 2) and includes "spending a lot of time" promoting home links with families and creating links and networks with the local community. The local community was an important feature in both the interviews and survey responses as being a significant contributor to delivery of this EYFS area. Providers detailed the time taken to create links and maintain these relationships overtime to aid future visits from organisations. Organisations included fire service, dentists, PCSOs, with external visits to zoos, farms and a barge (School 1, School 3, Nursery 2). Parent and grandparent contributions included adults who "taught" their professional skills to the children in a short presentation session, such as how to make items and parents who expressed a desire to assist with reading. Sharing home traditions was reported as a key part of this ELG and parents volunteer to share traditional foods and practices with the children in the settings. Providers also focused on building a sense of what it is to be a "good person" in the community and towards each other.

Providers were asked how often they talked to children about events in their own life (Figure 1), 94% reported this was at least half of the time the children attended to always talking to children about their home. Children share with the setting home information 73% of the time. When asked how often providers share information with parents about events from the setting 100% felt this was at least half the time the child attended to always. However, 29% of providers felt parents shared events from home around half of the time to always in relation to their child's attendance at the setting.

Never

NO DATA

Sometimes

- 6.67%
- 20.00%
- 73.33%

About half the time

- 13.33%
- 26.67%
- 33.33%
- 26.67%

Most of the time

- 16.00%
- 28.00%
- 16.00%
- 40.00%

Always

- 37.50%
- 56.25%
- 6.25%

🟥 How often do you talk with children about events in their own life?

🟪 How often do children share with you events from home?

🟦 How often do you share with parents events from the setting?

🟩 How often do parents share with you events from home?

Figure 1: Q10 survey data

Effective provision aids progression and attainment through:
- Consistent engagement with the local community
- Embedding a variety of opportunities to capture evidence continuously
- Offering realistic learning experiences and activities which develop language

Providers demonstrated creativity in developing with people living and working in the wider community. The capacity of providers to develop these links was a key feature of effective provision. Providers explained that taking the time to build relationships with parents through joint activities in the setting aided them in developing assessment opportunities 'We like to get out into the community as much as we can' (Nursery 2). The ability of providers to build relationships with

parents and learn about their wider lives for example: work experience, cultural traditions and interests required an investment of time. This time investment was viewed positively because it provided opportunities to share relevant examples with children who could often demonstrate heightened sensitivity to difference and acceptance. Five providers have developed a strong relationship with local community police officers. The officers called into their provision regularly, offered activities and occasionally worked with the children who were then able to demonstrate understanding of their role. For example, "Our PCSO is so helpful, they become familiar to the children who see them in the community too" (School 2). Other local services also support progression and attainment, six interviewees mentioned the fire service. For example, "The fire service visits are so much fun and aid language" (School 3) and 'We are arranging for the Fire Service to come in, the children take so much from this" (Nursery 2). Providers invited professional staff and parents to talk with the children about their work or traditions which also deepened the children's opportunities to understand different viewpoints and experiences. Providers also worked to identify ways to engage the children in the wider community by visiting local landmarks, and community facilities. The deepening of links between provider settings and home was facilitated by sharing resources for example, a soft toy with a diary allocated to different children each week along with a camera to take pictures of its adventures with the child's family was a common. Despite variety in the systems used to record a child's understanding, the use of cameras, post-it notes and systems to share information between school and home (School 1, School 3, Nursery 2).

3.2 The World ELG14

Best practice aids progression and attainment through:
- Provider capacity to create time and professional resource skills to enhance the quality of experiences children have access to
- Access to onsite and external facilities that are low cost financially, which assist in broadening the experiences children have access to, and build on limited life experiences in readiness for later life

Best practice features of this area include similar activities for People and Communities with an emphasis on pro-active engagement of providers to spend time organising and planning enriching events that encompass this ELG. For example, one provider commented that "… we are a resource, we are the best resource that they [children] could have…it has to come from us really" (Nursery 2). The range of best practices shared include, and in addition to People and Community examples, caring for living things in the setting such as class pets and having their own garden to grow plants. Those settings with wider access to grounds and outdoor areas had more opportunities to provide children with a wider range of experiences such as forest school (School 1, School 2, and Nursery 3). Relating these experiences to the children's own experience was reported as an

important part of this ELG to help children associate the differences between, homes, the setting and the wider world.

Survey Q13 addressed the myriad of components within the ELG to gain an understanding of these and provider confidence in delivery to support children's understanding to aid progression. Providers are extremely confident that the setting supports children well to understand similarities and differences between objects, materials and living things (see Figure 2). Providers are less confident that the settings can support child comprehension of similarities and differences between places, features of the child's environment and others (see Figure 2). This may be due to a range of cultures and limitations to families accessing external opportunities to build the foundations of understanding for these components (School 3).

Figure 2: Q13 survey data

Effective provision aids progression and attainment through:
- Broadening access to the outdoors
- Both thematic topics and child choice

Providers explored The World ELG using themes which they incorporated across the provision and linked to external activities. One provider explained how they link a number of activities to one theme, in this case 'Under the Sea' providing resources to identify sea life the children can use on daytrips to the seaside, the setting will be decorated to this theme and outside activities will also be thematic "we put sea life creatures (models) in the water trays outside" (Nursery 1). Effective practice to support themes included the use of social media resources, including shared Facebook groups and Pinterest. All nursery providers interviewed cited using these resources in their own time to gather as well as to contribute to ideas for activities that would engage the children in Understanding the World Area of Learning. One provider described changing continuous provision from teacher to child-led (School, 1) and moving away from topics. This has helped engage the children and aided the providers to capture evidence continuously.

3.3 Technology ELG15

Best practice aids progression and attainment through:
- Providers identifying the most appropriate resource for their cohorts to enhance learning
- Extending the use of the resources to facilitate a wider application in the children's day, an embedded way of using technology across the EYFS
- Broadening the definition of technology in response to the child's experience

Providers described a range of technologies that are used widely across the settings such as interactive whiteboard, story tins and headphones for story times (Nursery 3) and mobile devices such as iPads for learning. Nursery 2 commented that children have access to such devices at home and therefore their focus was on how to use a range of technologies associated with household devices. Nursery 1 confirmed the technology-rich home environment. This provided a holistic technological experience for children for this ELG.

Providers further reported the open-ended nature of technology, for example the use of cameras to record role play experiences that are processed and displayed for further conversations to be engaged in. Further to this, programmable toys, and other similar resources provided children with an opportunity to actively problem solve with the potential to aid wider achievement across the EYFS.

Figure 3: Q17 survey data

Providers expressed their confidence in using the technology to support learning and confidence in children's abilities to use the available resources. They were less confident in the range of resources available and how limited resources would impact on their ability to deliver a robust experience for the children. Nursery 2 raised lack of mobile devices such as tablets and apps due to financial limitations. School 1 was focused on broadening understanding of technology and using digital technology very specifically on limited projects due to: "massively delayed language" through excessive home access to digital technology. School 3 expressed the budgeting challenge of updating technology in line with the resources children can access at home with language barriers and delays affecting assessment "they know more than you think but, we need access to translators" (School 3).

Effective provision aids progression and attainment through:
- Consideration of appropriate technology use
- A broad definition of technology which includes household items

There were diverse views around what constituted effective provision in terms of technology. Whilst providers agreed that access to some form of technology was generally positive in their settings there was no consensus on what type of technology this should be. In five settings a range of resources were available including touch screen devices and laptops and another setting focused on using

household equipment such as hoovers and washing machines. There was disparity in terms of children's access to technology across the settings, this was not necessarily related to affluence as School 3 explained "every child in our class has access to a tablet at home but, some are not from affluent homes".

However, effective provision seemed to require technology to be thoroughly embedded across the setting to be used throughout the curriculum and would include some access to digital devices as well as household appliances. Providers suggested effective provision was to provide 'constant use… linked to topic or theme' (online survey) and alternatively very limited access when a provider took the position that the children had exceptional access at home and attended the provision for a broader range of experiences. This position of very limited access came from interactions with parents "from the relationships we have with families and the feedback, well, they don't come here to do that" (Nursery 2).

For further consideration:
When questioned about 'People and Communities' providers were confident in the range of best practices responses and offered a range of examples to demonstrate this. The next question posed related to best practice for 'the World', providers commented, for example, "…I would say that we just covered some of that…" (Nursery 3), "Erm well again yes just need to build on what I have already said…" (Nursery 2). This raises the question how these ELGs are determined in practice for assessment purposes contributing to the overall data in this Area of Learning.

3.4. Challenges and barriers to children's progression and attainment

Participants were asked to identify any factors that impacted upon their capacity to gather evidence for Understanding the World for purposes of children's progression and attainment of the ELGs. The survey data for all three ELGs is shown in Figure 4 and combines the three survey questions relating to the identification of barriers. As indicated in Figure 4, in terms of the subject knowledge in relation to the three ELGs practitioners consider they have greatest expertise in People the Communities and least in Technology. It is known from the EYFSP results 2016/2017 for Stoke-on-Trent that generally children perform better in the Technology ELG. Practitioners were asked the extent to which they thought children find the subject area of each ELG very hard to understand. Figure 1 illustrates that practitioners feel Technology is where children have the greater understanding in this Area of Learning (and this is confirmed in the LA's results – see Table 3) in that it is the least hard to understand (8%) and yet this is the ELG where practitioners believe they have less subject knowledge (13%) and is also the costliest to resource (50%).
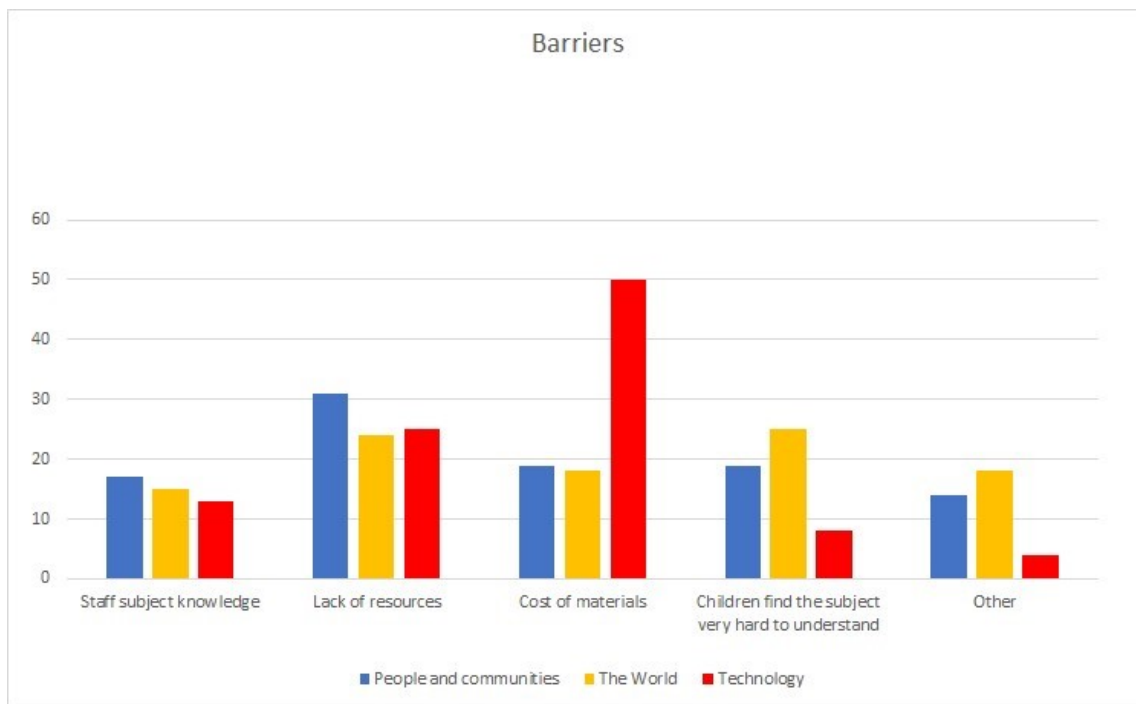
Figure 4: Barriers

Some nursery practitioners were of the view that children have access to a range of digital technologies in their home environment for example, mobile phones, ipads, tablets, TV etc. As such, they did not necessarily feel the need to 'teach' children about digital technology. Regarding resourcing the ELGs there is the feeling the "setting can't keep up with technology demands" (online survey) and "technology moves so much quicker than the ELG; work needs to be done to regularly update it" (School 4). Practitioners in nurseries and primary schools spoke about parents/carers who use mobile phones and other devices to keep their children quiet and occupied at home. Practitioners have also commented how they find many parents/carers engrossed in their own mobile devises, which they believe is having a detrimental impact on their children's language development. Examples included when parents/carers collect their children from the setting and hardly acknowledge the children or communicate with them verbally. Practitioners are of the view that many parents do not talk enough with their children at home and this is a significant factor hindering language development. Language acquisition is regarded as a particular issue in one setting where on entry to the nursey children have a level which has fallen to 8-20 months for language acquisition over the last three years (School 1). School 4 also cited delayed language through home access to digital technology as impacting on their ability to assess baselines for children with low level speech. "it is so important to gain a secure baseline. Capturing evidence for Understanding the World through discussion is reliant on language acquisition, this is negatively impacted by low level language" (School 4). In addition, School 4 noted, "children are egocentric and may notice physical differences but, struggle with understanding people may have different ideas and opinions". Access to internal and external resources which aid the acquisition of language relies on the creativity of practitioners and time available to plan visits in under resourced schools (School 4, School 1, Nursey 2, Nursey 3).

The interviews facilitated greater discussion with participants in relation to the challenge and barriers faced. Key themes emerging from the data are as follows:

Firstly, there is a **lack of any relevant training and the lack of opportunities for any continued professional development (CPD)** in relation to this Area of Learning.   The only training/CPD reported was in relation to receiving training and undertaking a qualification for forest school. Extracts from the data pertain to this: "there is no training for Understanding the World…we have done our own training really just through research…we do a lot of digging around ourselves" (Nursery 2), "none" (Nursery 1), "None specifically" (Nursery 3). There is some evidence in the data of confusion or mis-understanding amongst some practitioners regarding what constitutes 'Communities' and what constitutes 'the World'. It also appears that Technology is regarded narrowly in terms of digital and electronic technologies when 'technology' per se could arguably be conceived as a broader topic area. School 1 worked to broaden this definition through "good parent partnership, we look at all technology – microwaves, dishwashers and battery-operated items" (School 1).

Secondly, **the capacity of practitioners to build relationships with parents, community figures and other provision** is paramount for effectively delivering the People and Communities ELG. However, this was considered challenging and an area that "we have strived for" (Nursery 2). There is evidence in the data to suggest some practitioners make effective use of their parents inviting them in to share experiences, cultural backgrounds and professional roles. Members of the local community are also invited into schools periodically. The investment of time required to engage fully with the wider community can be a barrier to attainment because of other pressures on their time. For example, "there is such focus on reading, writing and maths it is difficult to find time to capture Understanding the World" (School 3).

A third barrier was identified as resources in terms of **budgets and funding**. For example, to "take the children further afield in the community…access to a minibus to take them out to different places, to buy resources…not a lot of parents have got a lot of money to pay for extra trips, so we have to go to free venues…" (Nursery 1). Due to lack of access to funding some practitioners are resourceful however by seeking resources which are "free" or "low-budget".   This extract exemplifies a common response found in the data; "researching for what is available for you to use in the community…researching for things that you can use yourself, things that you can possibly make for the children to use…I do all of that in my own time. I don't really have time to do it in work" (Nursey 1). This also indicates the level of some practitioners' goodwill in investing personal time seeking resources to use in their setting.

Provider confidence in delivery of ELG14 The World represents a fourth barrier to attainment. The data demonstrates a notably reduced confidence around how children understand the differences and similarities between places. In addition, how

children understand similarities and differences between features of their own environments. Figure 2 illustrated these responses with regard to confidence across the providers.

A fifth barrier relates to **language.** This has been discussed above in relation to the online survey data and was explored further in the interviews and also in relation to English as an Additional Language (EAL). As such, some providers struggle to engage parents in learning, for example, "we try but, language difficulties can be a problem" (Nursery 3) and "I think we can miss things because of the language barrier, we are working on this" (School 3).

Lack of formal opportunities to learn from other settings via the sharing of best practice with other similar settings represents the sixth and final barrier identified. The lack of opportunity to collaborate with other Early Years practitioners in the city was regarded by some as a barrier which mitigated against learning from others as well as sharing ideas, resources and understanding. Some practitioners clearly collaborate with those in other settings and periodically visits are made to other similar settings. However, on the whole it was felt greater opportunities for collaboration particularly between nurseries and primary schools would facilitate a greater understanding of the delivery of this Area of Learning and in the way assessments of the ELGs are made. It was considered this kind of collaboration would also be beneficial to children's transition between EYFS1 and EYFS2. Nevertheless, it is evident some practitioners do communicate via social media channels (e.g. WhatsApp groups) and appear to share ideas and resources in this way. They also utilise and share a range of resources available electronically. All the nursery provision cited accessing social media discussion groups and subject specific chat communities to collaborate and find ideas for activities: "when I go home I search for ideas on Pinterest and Facebook" (Nursery 2).

4. Recommendations for future work in sharing and supporting good practice

1. The provision of relevant training and regular CPD opportunities for Early Years practitioners in the city to facilitate (even) more effective delivery of the Understanding the World ELGs. This should include:
   a. Targeted training on the differences between ELG13 and ELG14 to facilitate practitioner understanding and increase confidence levels which will also inform how judgements are made in relation to children's progression and the assessment of the ELGs.
   b. Targeted training a develop a broader understanding and definition of 'technology'.

2. The facilitation of greater collaboration between settings and formal opportunities to share good practice and learn from other practitioners.

3. An increase in funding and resources for this Area of Learning to better support the delivery of the ELGs and to enable more activities outside of the school environment which practitioners believe facilitates the use of more vocabulary and greater language development.

4. Further research conducted in the city which investigates in greater depth issues surrounding language acquisition and development particularly in relation to the extent to which parents/carers interact and communicate with their children at home.

5. A celebration of the contribution made by local communities and their engagement with early years settings and which could also serve as means by which members of local communities could be made aware of how they might be involved in and contribute to children's learning in the early years.

6. Further research which investigates in greater depth over a longer period of time and with a larger sample of practitioners in the city some of the very interesting, complex and pertinent issues which have been identified in this project.

5. Acknowledgments

References

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