

Early Talk Boost

Review: January 2019

Note on provider involvement: This provider has agreed to EIF's terms of reference, and the assessment has been conducted and published with the full cooperation of the programme provider.

Early Talk Boost (ETB) is an intervention for children with delayed language. It is a targeted programme for children between the ages of 3 and 4. It is delivered in children's centres or other early years settings by early years practitioners, and aims to improve children's core language skills, as well as academic attainment and social/emotional difficulties in the longer term.

Children taking part in the programme have all been identified by early years practitioners as having delayed language (developing in the same way as typically developing children, though slower). The children do not have an identified special educational need. This may include children with English as an additional language.

Early Talk Boost group sessions are designed to replace or complement circle or group times.

Sessions are fun and interactive, and consist of practical activities, games, song, rhymes and a series of eight story books, specifically designed for Early Talk Boost.

Evidence
rating: **2**

Cost rating: **1**

EIF Programme Assessment

Early Talk Boost has **preliminary evidence** of improving a child outcome, but we cannot be confident that the programme caused the improvement.

Evidence
rating: **2**

What does the evidence rating mean?

Level 2 indicates that the programme has evidence of improving a child outcome from a study involving at least 20 participants, representing 60% of the sample, using validated instruments.

This programme does not receive a rating of 3 as its best evidence is not from a rigorously conducted RCT or QED evaluation.

Cost rating

A rating of 1 indicates that a programme has a low cost to set up and deliver, compared with other interventions reviewed by EIF. This is equivalent to an estimated unit cost of less than £100.

Cost rating: **1**

Child outcomes

According to the best available evidence for this programme's impact, it can achieve the following positive outcomes for children:

Enhancing school achievement & employment

Improved auditory language skills

Based on study 1

Improved expressive language skills

Based on study 1

Key programme characteristics

Who is it for?

The best available evidence for this programme relates to the following age-groups:

- Preschool

How is it delivered?

The best available evidence for this programme relates to implementation through these delivery models:

- Group

Where is it delivered?

The best available evidence for this programme relates to its implementation in these settings:

- Children's centre or early-years setting

The programme may also be delivered in these settings:

- Children's centre or early-years setting

How is it targeted?

The best available evidence for this programme relates to its implementation as:

- Targeted indicated
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Where has it been implemented?

England, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales

UK provision

This programme has been implemented in the UK.

UK evaluation

This programme's best evidence includes evaluation conducted in the UK.

Spotlight sets

EIF includes this programme in the following Spotlight sets:

- programmes for children with recognised or possible special education needs
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About the programme

What happens during delivery?

How is it delivered?

- The child-focused component of Early Talk Boost is delivered in three sessions (up to 15–20 minutes each) per week for nine weeks, by one early years practitioner to groups of children.
- There is also a home-based component, for each child, which involves using the Early Talk Boost story books at least once a week for up to 20 minutes.
- Finally, there is also a parent component for each parent or carer, which is delivered in a one-off workshop lasting one hour.

What happens during the intervention?

- Early Talk Boost group sessions are designed to replace or complement circle or group times.
- Sessions are fun and interactive and consist of practical activities, games, song, rhymes and a series of eight story books, specifically designed for Early Talk Boost. Sessions use a concrete approach, so the children experience direct, hands-on activities.
- Each session is supported visually by a planning board, song cards, toys and resources, etc..
- Each session focuses on the foundation communication and language skills. Songs and rhymes help to develop attention and listening as well as speech sound skills, and early reading; story sharing helps to develop sentence building and vocabulary acquisition; interactive activities help to develop social communication skills. The sessions aim to introduce, teach and practise these communication and language skills.

What are the implementation requirements?

Who can deliver it?

- The practitioner who delivers this programme is an early years practitioner with NFQ-5 level qualifications.

What are the training requirements?

- Practitioners have five hours of programme training each. Booster training of practitioners is not required.

How are the practitioners supervised?

- Supervision is not required.

What are the systems for maintaining fidelity?

Programme fidelity is maintained through the following processes:

- Training manual
- Other printed material
- Other online material
- Video or DVD training.

Is there a licensing requirement?

There is no licence required to run this programme.

How does it work? (Theory of Change)

How does it work?

- Children with good early language skills go on to make a good start at school academically, socially and emotionally.
- Early Talk Boost sessions, delivered by trained early years practitioners, use evidenced approaches to teach the foundation language skills needed for a successful start in school: attention and listening, learning and using new words, building sentences.
- In the short term, children's foundation language skills improve significantly, and they show improved dispositions for learning: confidence, resilience, curiosity.
- In the longer term, children will make a positive start at school and are able to access the curriculum. Ultimately the risk of poor academic attainment and social/emotional difficulties will be reduced.

Intended outcomes

Enhancing school achievement & employment

Contact details

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About the evidence

Early Talk Boost's most rigorous evidence comes from an RCT which was conducted in the UK.

This study identified statistically significant positive impact on a number of child outcomes.

This programme is underpinned by one study with a level 2 rating, hence the programme receives a level 2 rating overall.

Study 1

Citation: Reeves et al. 2018

Design: RCT

Country: United Kingdom

Sample: 85 children approximately 3 and a half years old, who had been selected by teachers for having delayed language development.

Timing: Post-test

Child outcomes:

- Improved auditory language skills
 - Improved expressive language skills
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Other outcomes:

- None measured
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Study rating: 2

Reeves, L., Hartshorne, M., Black, R., Atkinson, J., Baxter, A., & Pring, T. (2018). Early talk boost: A targeted intervention for three year old children with delayed language development. *Child Language Teaching and Therapy*, 34(1), 53-62.

Available at <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0265659018755526>

Study design and sample

The first study is an RCT.

This study involved random assignment of children to an Early Talk Boost intervention group, or to a wait-list control group.

The sample included 85 children who were approximately 3-and-a-half years old, and had been selected by teachers for having delayed language development.

Measures

Auditory language skills were assessed using the Preschool Language Scale (independent report).

Expressive language skills were assessed using the Preschool Language Scale (independent report).

Findings

This study identified statistically significant positive impact on a number of child outcomes.

This includes both auditory and expressive language skills.

The conclusions that can be drawn from this study are limited by methodological issues pertaining to the treatment condition not being modelled at the level of assignment, and the fact that the equivalence of groups is insufficiently demonstrated, hence why a higher rating is not achieved.

Other studies

The following studies were identified for this programme but did not count towards the programme's overall evidence rating. A programme receives the same rating as its most robust study or studies.

Forest Way Teaching School Alliance (2017) Early Talk Boost (I CAN) intervention: Improving communication and language in disadvantaged 3-4 year olds

Guidebook

The EIF Guidebook provides information about early intervention programmes that have at least preliminary evidence of achieving positive outcomes for children. It provides information based on EIF's assessment of the strength of evidence for a programme's effectiveness, and on detail about programmes shared with us by those who design, run and deliver them.

The Guidebook serves an important starting point for commissioners to find out more about effective early interventions, and for programme providers to find out more about what good evidence of impact looks like and how it can be captured. As just one of our key resources for commissioners and practitioners, the Guidebook is an essential part of EIF's work to support the development of and investment in effective early intervention programmes.

Our assessment of the evidence for a programme's effectiveness can inform and support certain parts of a commissioning decision, but it is not a substitute for professional judgment. Evidence about what has worked in the past offers no guarantee that an approach will work in all circumstances. Crucially, the Guidebook is not a market comparison website: ratings and other information should not be interpreted as a specific recommendation, kite mark or endorsement for any programme.

[How to read the Guidebook](#)

[EIF evidence standards](#)

[About the EIF Guidebook](#)

EIF

The Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) is an independent charity and a member of the What Works network. We support the use of effective early intervention for children, young people and their families: identifying signals of risk, and responding with effective interventions to improve outcomes, reduce hardship and save the public money in the long term.

We work by generating evidence and knowledge of what works in our field, putting this information in the hands of commissioners, practitioners and policymakers, and supporting the adoption of the evidence in local areas and relevant sectors.

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