

Raising Early Achievement in Literacy

Review: [Foundations for Life](#), July 2016

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.

Raising early achievement in literacy (REAL) aims to improve children's early literacy by teaching parents effective strategies for supporting their children's learning.

The programme is a long-duration (five group sessions and 10 home visits over 12 or 18 months) literacy programme designed for families with children aged between three-and-a-half and five years living in disadvantaged communities.

REAL is delivered by teachers who have been trained in the delivery of the REAL programme. REAL has five main components: home visits by programme teachers; provision of literacy resources (particularly books); centre-based group activities; special events (eg group library visits); and postal communication between the teacher and child.

The programme is based on the ORIM concepts (Opportunities, Recognition, Interaction and Models of literacy). Operating within this framework, the programme aims to support parents' contribution to their children's literacy learning through: i) providing opportunities to learn; ii) recognising and valuing early achievements; iii) interacting in learning situations; and iv) modelling literacy behaviours.

Evidence
rating: 3

Cost rating: 3

EIF Programme Assessment

Raising Early Achievement in Literacy has evidence of a **short-term positive impact** on child outcomes from at least one rigorous evaluation.

Evidence
rating: **3**

What does the evidence rating mean?

Level 3 indicates **evidence of efficacy**. This means the programme can be described as evidence-based: it has evidence from at least one rigorously conducted RCT or QED demonstrating a statistically significant positive impact on at least one child outcome.

This programme does not receive a rating of 4 as it has not yet replicated its results in another rigorously conducted study, where at least one study indicates long-term impacts, and at least one uses measures independent of study participants.

Cost rating

A rating of **3** indicates that a programme has a **medium cost** to set up and deliver, compared with other interventions reviewed by EIF. This is equivalent to an estimated unit cost of **£500–£999**.

Cost rating: **3**

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 literacy

Based on study 1

3.4-point improvement on the Sheffield Early Literacy Development Profile

Improvement index: **+16**

This means we would expect the average participant in the comparison group who did not receive the intervention (ie, someone for whom 50% of their peers have better outcomes and 50% have worse outcomes), to improve to the point where they would have better outcomes than 66% and worse outcomes than 34% of their peers, if they had received the intervention.

Immediately after the intervention

Improved letter recognition

Based on study 1

4.7-point improvement on the Clay Letter Recognition Test

Improvement index: **+12**

This means we would expect the average participant in the comparison group who did not receive the intervention (ie, someone for whom 50% of their peers have better outcomes and 50% have worse outcomes), to improve to the point where they would have better outcomes than 62% and worse outcomes than 38% of their peers, if they had received the intervention.

Immediately after the intervention

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:

- Home visiting

Where is it delivered?

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

- Home

The programme may also be delivered in these settings:

- Home
- Children's centre or early-years setting

How is it targeted?

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

- Targeted selective
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Where has it been implemented?

United Kingdom

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 does not currently include this programme within any Spotlight set.

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About the programme

What happens during delivery?

How is it delivered?

- REAL is delivered to groups of approximately eight families in five group sessions (of approximately 45 minutes' duration). In addition, 10 home visits are offered on an individual basis to each family. The programme is delivered by a teacher with QCF-6 qualifications and 64 hours of programme training.

What happens during the intervention?

- The programme is delivered over 12 or 18 months and is designed for families with children aged between three-and-a-half and five years living in disadvantaged communities.
- REAL has six main components: home visits by programme teachers; provision of literacy resources (particularly books); centre-based group activities; special events (eg group library visits); postal communication between the teacher and child; and appropriate adult education opportunities for parents.
- The programme is based on the ORIM concepts: Opportunities, Recognition, Interaction and Models of literacy.
- Operating within this framework, the programme aims to support parents' contribution to their children's literacy learning through: i) providing opportunities to learn; ii) recognising and valuing early achievements; iii) interacting in learning situations; and iv) modelling literacy behaviours.

What are the implementation requirements?

Who can deliver it?

- The programme is delivered by a teacher with NFQ 7/8 qualifications and 64 hours of programme training.

What are the training requirements?

- Practitioners have 64 hours of programme training. Booster training is not required.

How are the practitioners supervised?

- In the evaluated REAL project, supervision was provided by two programme developer supervisors with NFQ 7/8 qualifications.

What are the systems for maintaining fidelity?

- Training manual
- Other online material
- Video or DVD training
- Face-to-face 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?

- REAL assumes that children's early literacy skills can be improved through effective parental strategies for supporting children's learning.
- REAL provides parents of pre-school children with strategies, ways of thinking about their roles, and resources to enable them to support their child's development of literacy skills.
- In the short term, children's literacy skills improve.
- In the long term, the programme is designed to improve children's literacy achievement in school.

Intended outcomes

Contact details

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<http://www.real-online.group.shef.ac.uk/about-real.html>

About the evidence

Raising Early Achievement in Literacy's (REAL) 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.

A programme receives the same rating as its most robust study, which in this case is the Nutbrown et al. (2005) study, and so the programme receives a Level 3 rating overall.

Study 1

Citation: Nutbrown et al (2005)

Design: RCT

Country: United Kingdom

Sample: 176 families

Timing: Post-test

Child outcomes:

- Improved literacy
 - Improved letter recognition
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Other outcomes:

- None measured
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Study rating: 3

Nutbrown, C., Hannon, P., & Morgan, A. (2005). *Early literacy work with families*. London: SAGE Publications

Study design and sample

The first study is a rigorously conducted RCT.

This study involved random assignment of children to a REAL treatment group and a business-as-usual group.

This study was conducted in the UK, with a sample of 176 parents and their children randomly selected from the waiting lists of 11 schools within disadvantaged communities in Sheffield.

Measures

Child literacy was measured using the Sheffield Early Literacy Development Profile (direct assessment) and the School Literacy Attainment KS1 Literacy Assessments (direct assessment). Child letter recognition was measured using the Clay test (direct assessment). Child vocabulary was measured using the British Picture Vocabulary Scale – Revised (direct assessment).

Findings

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

This includes:

- Improved literacy
- Improved letter recognition

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.

Hirst, K., Hannon, P., & Nutbrown, C. (2010). Effects of a preschool bilingual family literacy programme. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 10, 183-208 - **This reference refers to a randomised control trial, conducted in the UK.**

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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