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.
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

Improved letter recognition - 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:

- Home visiting

Where is it delivered?
The best available evidence for this programme relates to its implementation 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

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.
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 QCF-6 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 QCF-level 7/8.

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.
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http://www.real-online.group.shef.ac.uk/about-real.html
About the evidence

REAL’s most rigorous evidence comes from an RCT conducted in the UK.

Study 1

Citation: Nutbrown et al (2005) | Design: RCT

Country: United Kingdom

Sample: 176 families

Child outcomes:
Improved literacy
Improved letter recognition

Other outcomes:
None measured


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.

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
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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