

# Formative Evaluation of Nuffield Early Language Intervention Preschool (NELI Preschool) 2024

## Setting Information Sheet

### **About the programme**

NELI Preschool is a 20-week oral language programme, centred around shared storybook reading, which is designed to improve the oral language skills of children in nurseries. Each week focuses on a different book – a mixture of traditional tales, contemporary stories, and non-fiction – and is comprised of activities to encourage the development of a rich vocabulary and ability to listen to, tell and enjoy stories.

The NELI Preschool intervention includes two core components: universal language enrichment for all children in nursery (Whole Group Sessions) and targeted intervention for those with the weakest oral language skills (Small Group and Individual Sessions). Whole Group Sessions are delivered daily by nursery staff, usually the room leader or class teacher, who is trained and supported to use the programme. In addition to this, six children with the weakest oral language skills in each class will receive additional Small Group and Individual Sessions, delivered by nursery practitioners or teaching assistants who have also been trained and are supported to use the programme. The programme training and support is delivered by OxEd and Assessment (OxEd). Nurseries will also be supported by the OxEd team to determine the most suitable set-up for the whole-class and targeted components according to the nursery structure.

The programme will provide nurseries with access to a child-friendly language screening tool (LanguageScreen), which runs on a digital tablet. This is used to assess children's oral language skills and will identify the children with the lowest language scores for targeted intervention. LanguageScreen is not in conflict with other assessments such as Wellcomm, and, in fact, provides additional information for any referral process.

The programme consists of:

- Whole Class Sessions (15 minutes every day): Each week the children first listen to the whole story of the week and are engaged in the text through interactive questioning and discussion. Following sessions introduce new special words and include activities to deepen understanding and encourage use of the new vocabulary.
- Small Group Sessions (3 x 15-minute sessions a week for children selected for targeted intervention): These sessions focus on strengthening the children's abilities to use the taught vocabulary, extending this learning into other contexts.
- One-to-One Sessions (1 x 5-minute session a week for each of the children selected to receive targeted intervention): Individual sessions focus on the development of each child's understanding, using prompts to encourage the child to retell the story.
- Using LanguageScreen to assess children's oral language skills prior to and following programme delivery.

In addition to sessions and materials, nurseries also receive comprehensive CPDUK-accredited online practitioner training, the easy-to-use highly reliable language screening tool and continuous support throughout delivery of the programme from the experienced speech and language specialists in the OxEd team.

In 2021-22, 65 nurseries took part in an [evaluation](#) of NELI Preschool that showed positive results. Children who received NELI Preschool made three months' additional progress in overall language skills compared to those that did not receive the programme. As the majority of the nurseries in the previous evaluation were state-maintained, the aim of the current evaluation is to build on these findings to assess whether these positive results persist when the programme is delivered in private, voluntary and independent (PVI)

nurseries.

### **About the current evaluation**

As part of the Department for Education's Early Years Recovery Programme, nine Stronger Practice Hubs across England and the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) are working together to fund nurseries' access to evidence-informed programmes and study the programmes' influence on practice and children's outcomes. This initiative aims to support education recovery following the pandemic, whilst also developing our understanding of effective professional development in the early years. The NELI Preschool programme will be delivered by OxEd and will be independently evaluated by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER). The aim of the evaluation is to ascertain the impact of NELI Preschool on the language skills of 3 to 4-year-old children.

As part of this larger project, NFER is carrying out a formative evaluation prior to the main effectiveness trial in order to better understand the experience of private, voluntary and independent (PVI) nurseries while using the NELI Preschool programme.

The formative evaluation will focus on the activities and delivery of NELI Preschool in 20 PVI nurseries between January and April 2024, although the intervention will continue to be delivered and supported until July 2024.

### **What is the benefit of my nursery participating in this formative evaluation?**

Your nursery will contribute to a better understanding of how the programme can be most effectively delivered in PVI nurseries, including how best to implement the programme in the future and at a larger scale.

All participating nurseries will also receive:

- The NELI Preschool programme
- Up to £445 in recognition of their contribution to this research
- Paid staff time to complete training and administer LanguageScreen assessments (£120 per trainee for up to 2 trainees per nursery; £55 for testing all eligible children with LanguageScreen before and after programme delivery (each assessment takes c.5-10 minutes per child).
- Access to LanguageScreen reports for children who have been assessed before and after programme delivery.

### **Who can take part in this formative evaluation?**

- **PVI nurseries** with a **minimum of twelve 3 to 4-year-old children attending 15+ hours per week** in the 2023-24 academic year.
- Participating nurseries must be willing to allocate time for a *minimum* of two nursery staff members to complete online training and administer LanguageScreen, encouraging as many practitioners who work with 3 to 4-year-olds as possible to complete the online training as well. Payment for training time will be made for up to 2 trainees per nursery (£120 per trainee).
- Nurseries that took part in the previous evaluation of NELI Preschool (known as the NELI – Nursery or NELI-N efficacy trial) by the University of Oxford are not eligible to take part in this evaluation.
- All 3 to 4-year-old children (as of 31<sup>st</sup> August 2023) who are in the pre-school classroom and attend nursery 15+ hours a week are eligible to take part in the evaluation. Children who attend fewer than 15 hours a week or who 'move up' or join the pre-school classroom after nurseries have completed their baseline LanguageScreen assessments are not eligible for the evaluation; however, these children can still take part in the Whole Group Sessions they are present for.

### **What does the training look like?**

All staff members involved in the delivery of NELI Preschool sessions will be given access to the online training supported by OxEd. This Continued Professional Development (CPD) is accredited by CPDUK with a certificate of completion at the end of the training course. The training course for NELI Preschool consists of:

- A 10-12 hour online, asynchronous training course with no live elements that can be completed at the convenience of practitioners' schedules.
- The first part of the training covers the development of oral language skills, the importance of oral language, developmental milestones and key teaching strategies to support language development. The second part focuses on how to deliver the programme effectively, including videos of sessions with commentary to support practitioner learning and confidence.
- Discussion forums where the research and specialist team mentors can answer questions, and trainees can interact with mentors and with each other to take an active role in peer-to-peer support.
- A 'Delivery Support Hub' for practitioners to share ideas, receive weekly tips and updates and continue engaging with the research and specialist team to answer any queries or issues that arise throughout delivery.

Payment for training staff will be made by OxEd directly to nurseries on completion of the online training for nominated staff. This payment is available for up to 2 members of staff in each nursery, although more than this may undertake the training.

### **When will the training take place?**

Training is online and asynchronous; practitioners can access training from January 2024. Training must be completed by the end of January to ensure that delivery of the programme can begin in February 2024. Practitioners will retain access to the training throughout programme delivery.

### **What does the evaluation involve?**

As part of the evaluation, all participating nurseries will be required to use LanguageScreen to assess all children aged 3-4 (as on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2023) in the nursery prior to starting programme delivery.

In addition, nurseries will be asked to share with NFER the nursery attendance patterns for each child, the names of any children in receipt of the Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) and the names of those children selected for the targeted intervention.

Some nurseries will be invited to participate in additional activities to support NFER's understanding of the experience, challenges and facilitators of delivering the intervention in a PVI nurseries. These optional activities comprise:

- An online or in-person interview with the NELI Preschool lead in the nurseries;
- Facilitating an NFER researcher to visit the nursery to observe session delivery;
- Tracking when each programme session is delivered and which children attended using NFER's NELI Preschool session attendance register.

### **How should my nursery sign up for this evaluation?**

The OxEd team is sending a Memorandum of Understanding to take part in this evaluation to nurseries who expressed an interest and received confirmation of their participation in December 2023 for the Nursery Manager to sign and return.

### **Who should I contact for more information?**

Find out more about NELI Preschool and see what other nurseries say about the programme here: <https://oxedandassessment.com/uk/nelipreschool/>.

For further information about the NELI Preschool programme, please contact Mariela Rios Diaz, Research Officer and NELI Preschool Project Manager at OxEd:

[nelipreschool@oxedandassessment.com](mailto:nelipreschool@oxedandassessment.com)

For further information about the evaluation please contact NFER at [NELIPreschool@nfer.ac.uk](mailto:NELIPreschool@nfer.ac.uk)

### **Who controls what data is shared?**

NFER is the data controller for this evaluation and will make decisions about how and what personal data is used in accordance with the objectives of the evaluation set by the EEF. OxEd is the data processor during the evaluation.

### **Privacy Information**

OxEd & Assessment's Privacy Notice can be found [here](#).

You can see further details of the evaluation and links to NFER's privacy notices for the evaluation [here](#).

### **Timeline for key activities 2023-2024**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Event</b>
Early January 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eligible nurseries sign up to the trial (Nursery Manager signs a Memorandum of Understanding)</li> <li>• Nurseries nominate a key project contact (NELI Preschool lead)</li> <li>• Nurseries nominate minimum 2 staff members to complete the NELI Preschool training</li> <li>• NFER provides nurseries with parent information letters to be circulated to parents</li> <li>• Nurseries circulate parent information letters to parents, allowing for 7-day period after circulation before any assessment/data collection activities begin to allow for any potential withdrawals</li> <li>• NFER invites selected nurseries to participate in additional data collection activities</li> </ul>
Mid-January 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nominated practitioners complete NELI Preschool training (online and asynchronous)</li> <li>• Nurseries complete baseline LanguageScreen assessment with all 3 to 4-year-old children in the preschool classroom</li> <li>• OxEd securely shares with NFER the name, DOB, gender, EAL status and LanguageScreen assessment data for children assessed with LanguageScreen with NFER</li> <li>• Nurseries receive access to LanguageScreen results along with Targeted Intervention allocation recommendations</li> <li>• NFER collects additional child data (EYPP status, nursery attendance patterns) from nurseries</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NFER shares NELI Preschool session attendance registers with selected nurseries</li> </ul>
February- May 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nurseries deliver the NELI Preschool programme (supported by OxEd)</li> <li>Selected nurseries complete the NELI Preschool session attendance registers and share them with NFER</li> <li>NFER conducts staff interviews and visits with selected nurseries</li> </ul>
June-July 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nurseries complete delivery of NELI Preschool, including reassessing children with LanguageScreen to gauge progress</li> <li>All nurseries receive payment for completing relevant evaluation activities and agreed backfill payments for staff time</li> </ul>