



Parents, Early Years and Learning (PEAL) accreditation

Key messages from evaluation

Background

PEAL originated as a consortium project of NCB (National Children's Bureau), Coram Family and the London Borough of Camden. Its core aims include identifying and disseminating existing effective practice in engaging parents, by rolling out a core model of training with materials to support practitioners in engaging parents. The training supports all early years settings to meet the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and the Children's Centre Practice Guidance.

In April 2007 PEAL was funded by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) as part of the Early Learning Partnerships Project (ELPP) Strand 3 - upskilling the workforce. In conjunction with partner organisations, PEAL training was rolled-out to practitioners working with young children in home-based and group settings. As well as attending the PEAL training, practitioners can carry out follow-up work that can be assessed as part of an accredited course 'work with parents to engage them in their children's early learning' which forms part of the City & Guilds award 'Work with Parents'.

About the evaluation

NCB's Research Evidence and Evaluation department was commissioned to evaluate the experiences of practitioners who had undertaken the PEAL accreditation and what changes have been implemented as a result of the accreditation. This summary draws upon findings from eleven interviews with practitioners and managers within a range of early years settings, who had completed the Level 3 PEAL accreditation.

Implementing the learning from PEAL training and accreditation

Practitioners made a number of changes to their practice. Examples of actions resulting directly from accreditation included:

- Introducing setting to home diaries, to share observations of children's learning with parents
- Carrying out joint observations of children's learning with parents
- Making physical changes to early years settings to create a more inclusive and welcoming environment for families
- Reviewing and developing setting policies
- Setting up specific projects for children and parents to do together, including cookery, music, arts and crafts

Impact on practitioners

Participants reported a number of ways in which undertaking the accreditation had impacted upon them as individuals.

- **Improved confidence** enabling them to implement changes or new ideas and to have confidence in the work they were already doing with parents. The accreditation also gave them more confidence to communicate with parents about their children's learning and development.
- **Improved knowledge and understanding** in terms of implementing ideas on how to involve parents and allowed them to reflect on their own practices.

Impact on settings

Practitioners identified a number of impacts on their setting as a result of their undertaking the accreditation.

- **Increased knowledge of the workforce** by sharing their knowledge gained through the accreditation process with staff members, encouraging them to communicate more with parents and working together as a team to implement changes in their setting.
- **Changes to policy** for example introducing a more informal 'open house' policy for parents to drop in or call a setting at anytime, and changes to food policy by getting feedback from parents on healthy eating.

Impact on children and families

Some examples of emerging impact on children and families included:

- **Parents better informed** about their children's learning and the activities that their children were involved in at the settings. This increased knowledge was closely linked to the work taking place to increase communication between parents and staff.
- **Increased parental involvement** having a positive impact on children's learning and development. Practitioners reported that building good relationships with parents and creating an environment where parents can get more involved and share information about their children's interests had a positive impact on children's learning and development.

Conclusions: key messages

- The evaluation found that practitioners found PEAL training and the accreditation very relevant to their work in early years settings
- Practitioners were able to use the accreditation in planning and implementing strategies to engage parents in their children's learning
- Accreditation helped to motivate practitioners to implement changes in the early years settings where they worked

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For more information about PEAL, visit: www.peal.org.uk