

News story: New training for health visitors to boost early language skills

Children most at risk of starting school without the basic language and communications skills are set to benefit from expert education support at home.

Health visitors – who routinely do home visits to check on a child's development at age two – will receive additional training to identify speech, language and communication needs early on, with a new assessment and support package.

Specialist training will be provided for 1,000 health visitors who will work in some of the most deprived communities in England, as part of the Government's drive to tackle the 'word gap' – the gap in communication skills between disadvantaged children and their peers.

Speaking to an audience of 300 early years professionals in Manchester today (Thursday 28 February), Children and Families Minister Nadhim Zahawi will also announce £24 million of additional funding for the 2019-20 academic year for Maintained Nursery Schools, providing reassurance for these settings which tend to care for higher numbers of disadvantaged children, often most at risk of falling behind.

Children and Families Minister Nadhim Zahawi is expected to say:

Being able to communicate and express yourself is the gateway to success, not just in school but in later life. It's these crucial early years that make the most impact on a child's future path – because for those children who start out behind their peers, it's so much harder to catch up.

The evidence tells us that we need to improve children's communication and language before they arrive at school, when so much of a child's time is spent at home, to help get them on track to be confident, able learners.

If we are to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children, we must think about how we can do things differently – including through parents. No parent has all the answers – so we need to make it easier for them to kickstart their child's learning at the earliest opportunity, whether by encouraging them to take part in educational activities as a family, support from trained experts at home to identify concerns earlier, or better access to high-quality early years education.

Children who start school with poor vocabulary are twice as likely to be unemployed as an adult, so health visitors will be trained to recognise early signs of delays with a child's speech and language development and take action when it can have the most benefit.

The programme, a joint initiative being rolled out across the country by the Department for Education and Public Health England, will benefit thousands of families across the country, with a focus on parents who may lack the time, resources, or confidence to support their children's learning at home.

It builds on the Education Secretary Damian Hinds' society-wide ambition to halve the proportion of children leaving Reception year without the communication, language and literacy skills needed to thrive within the next decade.

The first wave of training will involve 400 health visitors in 49 council areas identified as being in high need, based on deprivation factors including free school meal eligibility and the level achieved in speech, language and communication among children aged five in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile. The next wave will train a further 600 health visitors from 2020 onwards.

Professor Viv Bennett, Chief Nurse at Public Health England, said:

Health visitors have trusted relationships with families and play a vital role in supporting young children's health and wellbeing. This important new training will help more children develop the language and literacy skills they need to reach their full potential, ensuring that specialist support gets to those that need it most.

Health visitors in five areas of the country – Derbyshire, Newham, Middlesbrough, Wakefield and Wiltshire – will trial a bespoke early language assessment tool being developed by the University of Newcastle, led by Professor James Law.

The assessment tool will be designed to be quick and easy for health visitors to use to support their professional judgement, taking into account any concerns raised by parents and carers. It will be trialled for the first time this summer and rolled out nationally in 2020.

Mayor of Greater Manchester Andy Burnham said:

The early years of a child's life are critical in giving them the best start and the best opportunities to get on. Speech and language skills are essential to that which is why this announcement is good news for Greater Manchester – and good news for our children and families.

This joint programme will enhance the work we are already doing

across the city-region, doing things differently and driving forward pioneering approaches to close the educational inequality gap and ensure no child is left behind.

In recognition of the need for certainty about the 2019-20 academic year in maintained nursery schools, an additional £24 million will be provided to local authorities to enable them to continue funding maintained nursery schools at higher rates. This provides certainty for the sector ahead of the Spending Review.

Press release: Nearly £10 million cash boost to bring hundreds of homes to Festival Gardens

- £10 million for iconic Liverpool site at heart of the city
- Funding comes from Government's £450 million Local Authority Accelerated Construction (LAAC) programme
- Homes England to share office space with combined authority to help realise housing ambitions

Up to 1500 family homes will be built at the Festival Gardens in Liverpool thanks to a multi-million pound funding boost from Homes England, the agency announced today (February 28).

The Government's housing accelerator – which brings experts and funding to areas to tackle the housing crisis – will give a grant of £9.9 million to Liverpool City Council.

The cash injection– which comes from Government's £450 million Local Authority Accelerated Construction (LAAC) programme – will allow essential remediation work to take place on the site, paving the way for residential development to begin.

The news comes as Homes England officially opened new offices in the same building as Liverpool City Region Combined Authority at Mann Island, Pier Head – a move designed to help the two organisations collaborate more effectively to get homes built.

Sir Edward Lister, Chairman of Homes England, said:

“We are determined to use all the resources available to us to make homes happen across England – so I'm thrilled our funding means work can move forward rapidly at this historic site, providing homes for hundreds of families.

“And with Homes England and combined authority experts now working side by side, we expect to further accelerate the construction of new houses across the region.”

Minister of State for Housing, Kit Malthouse MP, said:

“Delivering the homes Liverpool needs is a crucial element of our plan to build a successful and vibrant Northern Powerhouse.

“I was born and brought up in Liverpool and went to the original garden festival as a child, so I know how much this investment will regenerate a key area of this great city, transforming Festival Gardens site with desperately needed family homes.”

The council has long held ambitious plans for the site but, to date, a lack of funding has meant crucial remediation works have been unable to take place. Now, activity is expected to begin on-site in the spring, with the first homes being available by 2022.

In addition to owner-occupied houses, the site will also include privately rented apartments.

Joe Anderson, Mayor of Liverpool, said:

“We welcome this essential financial injection from Homes England. Festival Gardens is a much-loved waterfront location and people have very fond memories of spending time there. We are fully aware of the potential the Festival Gardens has and its transformation will be a game-changer for this city’s economy in terms of new homes, construction jobs and growth.

“Thanks to this funding, the council can start essential remediation works on site and move forward with the vision of creating a significant number of new family homes in South Liverpool at an iconic destination.

“Alongside this, we are testing feasibility for a leisure element on site – Festival Gardens will not only deliver a much sought-after housing development, but also a first class visitor and cultural destination.”

Steve Rotheram, Metro Mayor of the Liverpool City Region, said:

“I welcome today’s announcements from Homes England which demonstrate a real and ongoing commitment to the Liverpool City Region.

“I am particularly pleased to welcome the co-location of Homes England staff with the Combined Authority, which is the first arrangement of its kind in the country. Being physically based together in the same building will facilitate even closer joint working and present opportunities for further projects across the whole city region.”

Ends

The Homes England press office can be contacted on media@homesengland.gov.uk or 0207 874 8262.

Press release: Newton-Paulet Fund: Professional Development Engagement Programme

From the 18th to 20th February, the workshop on Governance and Management of science, technology and innovation in Regional development took place, an activity that forms part of the Newton-Paulet fund to build capacities in the Peruvian system of science, technology and innovation, through its development and commitment program. It was organized by the British Council and Concytec, with the support of Oxentia. Leader in the implementation of innovation policies in the United Kingdom. Representatives from the public, private sector, regional governments and regional chambers of commerce participated.

During the inauguration, the president of Concytec, Fabiola León-Velarde, expressed the need to promote and strengthen universities and research institutes to close the gap of researchers that exists in Peru. She addressed that Peru must first generate human resources in CTI to allow the transfer of knowledge.

In addition, the British ambassador in Peru, Kate Harrisson, emphasized the collaboration in research and innovation that both countries have and that it is been strengthened in recent years. "Science and innovation are important and essential for the sustainable development of any country. There is no growth that lasts without new knowledge, technologies and practices. Even more important, science and innovation influence and improve our lives, for example, clean energies and better medicines.

The event lasted three days, where the importance of the CTI's investment and development in regions was emphasized, to give greater sustainability to the processes of innovation, employment generation and to improve the quality of life of their communities. The result of the workshop reflected in the design of a plan of action to promote the CTI in their regions with the objective of being able to assure financing of innovation as priority. In addition, the attendees were able to know the different instruments of funding, competitive funds and how these application mechanisms work, in order to be able to access them.

News story: New call for bids for the Cuba Programme Fund for the FY 2019-20.

The project funds are aimed at supporting technical assistance work between the UK and Cuba in a number of priority areas through small – scale, high-impact project interventions (up to £10,000).

The British Embassy will now run a competitive bidding process in order to ensure we use our allocation for projects that are of high quality and deliver value for money.

Further information and guidance on how to bid is set out below.

Cuba Priorities for UK FY 2019-20 (expenditure must be complete at 85% by mid December 2019).

The Embassy is looking for innovative projects, with concrete objectives and measurable policy outcomes. We remind bidders that we cannot fund academic research projects, or research collaboration projects.

Your proposal must be related to one of the following policy areas:

- Financial and Professional Services, Central Banking.
- Global Health Threats, Biotech and Life Sciences
- Higher Education and English Language Teaching
- Energy (including renewable energy) strategy and technology
- Public Procurement
- Public Policy, Administration and Governance
- Cuban economy, challenges and solutions.

Who may bid? Eligibility criteria

In order to be eligible, your organization or agency must be a legal entity, not-for-profit or commercial company, a registered non-governmental (NGO) or governmental organization, an academic or research institution, and must demonstrate that it has:

- Previous experience in delivering and managing projects
- Preferably previous experience working with international agencies/organizations
- Proof of legal registration
- Sufficient technical, financial, human and logistical capacity to deliver the project being proposed.
- The capacity to deliver at least 85% of the proposed project activity by mid-December 2019.

How to bid?

Your proposal should include the followings forms:

1. Project Proposal Form for projects under £10,000
2. A fully developed Activity-Based Budget (financial breakdown)

Each institution may submit up to a maximum of 5 proposals, which can be completed in English or Spanish. The Embassy Programme Fund does not authorize the purchase of capital goods, flight costs above economy class, nor can it fund purely academic research projects.

Only bids approved by the Cuba Programme Board will be considered for delivery. Bidders will be advised if their proposals are accepted for implementation. When approved, implementers will be asked for further due diligence information, and finally asked to sign a contract or grant agreement with the British Embassy in Havana.

Please send all project documents to UKinCubaProjects@fco.gov.uk

In the subject line of the email please indicate "Project Proposal Form" and please include in the body of the message a brief reference to the organization and the project title.

The deadline for submission of project proposals is Monday March 25, 2019

The budget

Project proposals must outline how budgets are to be spent using the Activity Based Budget Form (ABB). Value for money must be demonstrated.

The full bid document must be accompanied by a fully completed activity based budget. FC0 Project Management Procedures require the delivery of the budget using the ABB form.

This must be completed – the project proposal will not be considered without a detailed ABB. Implementers will need to break down all activity costs into components so it is clear how they are made up and which month each payment is due. Provide as much detail as possible, (i.e. do not state just the figure for a workshop, but break that down into venue, catering, travel costs etc.).

Indicative Timetable Bidding Round Timeline FY 2019-20

Dates	Activity
27 February 2019	This call for bids announcement made
25 March 2019	Deadline for Implementers to submit Project Proposal Forms and ABB, via email, to the British Embassy Havana Projects Team
25 March-19 April 2019	Project Proposal Forms reviewed by Cuba Programme Board at the British Embassy in Havana

Dates	Activity
22 April 2019	Outcome of successful bids notified to implementers/bidders

Documents for Downloading:

MS Excel Spreadsheet, 30KB

If you have any queries, then you should contact to Maria Sosa, Projects and Prosperity Assistant at the British Embassy in Havana: 72142231 / 52115372 / maria.sosa@fco.gov.uk

You will also find this Call for Bids at the Website of the [British Embassy in Havana](#)

[Speech: Silencing the guns to 2020 and beyond](#)

Thank you Mr President. I would also like to thank the briefers for their valuable insights.

The United Kingdom welcomes Equatorial Guinea's initiative to schedule a high-level debate on this important issue. The United Kingdom believes that it is vital that we translate the noble goal of silencing the guns into concrete initiatives that will make a tangible difference to lives of ordinary people across Africa. And with this in mind I'd like to highlight four priorities to follow up on.

First: strong and effective partnerships. These are crucial in ensuring that the sum of our efforts is greater than its parts. The United Kingdom is committed to our strategic partnership with the African Union to support peace, stability and development. In doing so, we will continue to take a holistic approach, recognising that there is a mutually reinforcing link between security and prosperity. We will also continue to support efforts to strengthen and deepen the partnership between this Council and African regional and subregional organisations. As the Secretary-General set out in his sustaining peace agenda, effective early warning and conflict prevention mechanisms require close cooperation between all relevant stakeholders. Together we can and should scan the horizon for signs of emerging conflicts and crises in Africa, sharing our insights and analysis. And we should collaborate to take meaningful action at an early stage whenever opportunities arise to de-escalate violence and advance political solutions.

Second, Mr President – and a number of Council members have referred to this

today – we should give our full backing to effective preventative diplomacy, good offices and mediation as indispensable elements of regional and subregional efforts to promote peace and stability. The value of this work has been demonstrated in the African context. For example, in ECOWAS efforts to enable a peaceful transition of power in the Gambia in 2017 or IGAD support for the revitalisation of the peace process in South Sudan. This is why the United Kingdom is partnering with the African Union to support development of continental early warning capabilities in order to enhance preventative diplomacy efforts.

Third, Mr President, as Germany and Poland have already highlighted today and as the Silencing the Guns initiative rightly recognises, strengthening women's participation is another vital element of effective conflict prevention and resolution. This is reflected in the United Kingdom's current National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, which includes commitments to support the implementation of national action plans in a range of partner countries, including Nigeria, the DRC and South Sudan. The United Kingdom is also a proud member of the Friends of Femwise group, supporting the African Union's Femwise initiative to strengthen the network of African women involved in conflict prevention and mediation. We also attach great importance to the role of civil society and community initiatives to advance women's participation in conflict prevention and peace making. The example of Liberian Nobel Peace Prize laureate Leymah Gbowee and her fellow activists shows that when women campaigned for peace from the grassroots level, their activism can have a truly catalytic effect.

Finally, Mr President and as many other speakers have mentioned this morning, peace making and peacebuilding efforts should be complemented by a robust approach to countering the proliferation of weapons, especially small arms and light weapons. Small arms and light weapons have a role in ensuring legitimate defence and security but their misuse costs hundreds of thousands of lives every year, undermines security and development and fuels conflict crime and terrorism. This cannot be achieved without effective functioning of peace and security institutions at the national level. But it also relies on strong cross-border and regional cooperation. The United Kingdom looks forward to continuing to work with the African Union on improving management of small arms and light weapons and ammunition in Africa. This should support and complement existing work through the UN as well as other arms control treaties, conventions and regimes, including the arms trade treaty. We urge all States in the region that have not yet done so to become party to the relevant international arms control instruments, demonstrating their commitment to countering the proliferation of illicit weapons.

Mr President, the United Kingdom will remain a staunch supporter of African initiatives to foster peace and security across the African continent. We look forward to hearing from other member states in the course of today's debate about efforts in hand to deliver progress against the roadmap for silencing the guns to 2020 and beyond. Thank you.