

# GROWING MINDS

## HELPING DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN TO BE SCHOOL READY

An innovative and ground-breaking initiative to improve school readiness in disadvantaged communities. The project combines tested interventions to multiply impact.

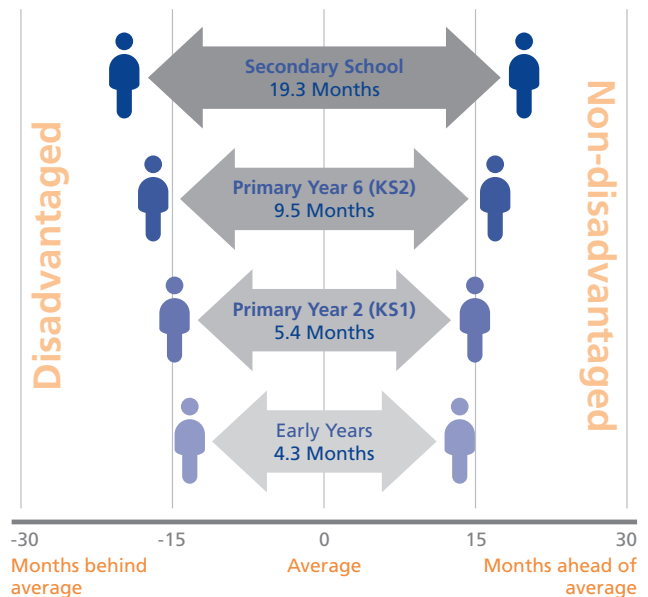
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## Why school readiness matters

When children from disadvantaged backgrounds start school they are typically 4.3 months behind their classmates. As they progress through school, this deficit affects the rate at which they learn, and so the gap grows. By the time they leave secondary school the gap is more than 19 months. In Oxfordshire, despite its reputation for academic excellence, the gap is even wider.

To thrive in a knowledge-based economy, a sound education is critical for the individual and the communities where they live. We also believe that every child deserves a fair chance and that their potential should not be limited by where they happen to be born. That's why we should close the gap – the good news is, it can be done.



'Closing the Gap? Trends in educational attainment and disadvantage', Education Policy Institute (July 2017)



## Closing the gap

This is a ground-breaking approach, working with partners to provide proven interventions in two disadvantaged areas in Oxfordshire. Working through a network of local partners we will provide books, in-home support and targeted groups to promote home learning. This will be available to families with children from birth to five in Littlemore and Berinsfield. By combining these interventions and offering them universally we will multiply their effectiveness and improve the life chances of babies, toddlers and pre-schoolers. To close the attainment gap we'll offer help to more than 800 children, over the seven year life of the project. The project is:

- Preventative;** conversations start at birth, building on a tangible resource - books.
- Collaborative;** using local delivery agencies in a joined-up approach.
- Evidence-based;** using tried and tested interventions developed by experts in their field.
- Place-based;** focussing on key communities with needs, using the assets already within those communities.



## What is the offer to families?

- Free monthly books:** Offered on registration of a child's birth as part of sign-up to the programme.
- Information about local support:** A visit or contact from a practitioner, with all the details about provision for families in the area.
- In-home support:** Home-Start general and targeted support to engaged families, for up to 6 months.
- The Peep Learning Together Group Programme:** Directly targeting improved home learning.



## Making it happen

Oxfordshire Community Foundation has convened a partnership of educational and childhood development charities, schools, children's centres, the NHS Health Visiting Service and the Register Office to deliver the programme. This unique combination will enable us to identify families where we can offer support, promote the programme, deliver it and measure the results.

A full range of front-line practitioners working in early years will be trained in this evidence-based programme and, working together, will engage local families in meaningful interactions and support to help children become school ready by the time they reach age five.

To be successful we need to commit to the long term, so this will be a seven year programme where we will engage with a number of cohorts in each year and stay with them until they start school. The first year cost for the programme is £184,000 and we estimate the total lifetime investment we need will be just under £1 million.

There is a wealth of research on the effectiveness of early years interventions to make us believe that the return on investment to society will be a multiple of that number (Search 'Wave Trust, Economics of Early Years Investment').



## Our partners

**Imagination Library** – An international scheme providing age-appropriate monthly books from birth. Sign-up will trigger engagement with the wider service offer. [www.imaginationlibrary.com/uk/](http://www.imaginationlibrary.com/uk/)

**Home-Start** – Skilled volunteers and practitioners providing in-home support to families of young children through trusting relationships. [www.home-start.org.uk/](http://www.home-start.org.uk/)

**Peep Learning Together Programme** – An evidence-based parenting programme, developed by Peep, promoting home learning and school readiness. [www.peep.org.uk/ltp](http://www.peep.org.uk/ltp)

**Berlin Centre** – A well connected and proactive children and family centre in Berinsfield.

**John Henry Newman Academy** – Proactive and well regarded, and based in Littlemore.

**Health Visiting Service** – The NHS service for families with new-borns, also engaging with 2-year olds for a developmental check.

**Register Office** – The council service for registration of births in the county.

**Evaluation Consultants** – Independent partners and experts in evaluation methodologies, including the Oxford Universities.



Books: A conversation starter from birth



Evidence-based programmes targeting the Home Learning Environment



## Measuring success

The project has been designed and sized to be measurable so we can learn, build on success and share with others. The key measure for the project is an increase in the percentage of children achieving a 'Good Level of Development' in their first year at school. This measure is part of the national framework for early years development, called the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile.



## How can you help?

To secure the ongoing sustainability of the project beyond the initial pilot phase and over the seven-year term, we would welcome multi-year support. Should there be sufficient interest, we have already identified other areas within the county where we could expand and scale the project up.



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