

National Institute of Economic and Social Research

Targeted home support could be key in children's early language development

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Results published today from *'Talking Together'*, a project developed in Bradford and funded by the Nuffield Foundation, shows evidence of promise in improving parent and child outcomes.

Created and delivered by [BHT Early Education and Training](#), the project aims to help families support their children's language and communication development, and is one of over 20 services commissioned by [Better Start Bradford](#) to support families with children 0-3 years. Delivered in the home by trained language development workers, the programme involves six weekly sessions that support parents with the skills, knowledge and confidence to provide a stimulating, language rich environment. The sessions focus on topics such as the importance of play, praise and encouragement, and what is communication. Importantly, the programme is not language specific and is appropriate for use with any family regardless of the language they speak at home.

Researchers from NIESR, University of York and Born in Bradford have completed a small randomised controlled feasibility study which marks the first steps in establishing the success of the programme. Key findings from the report show that the programme was positively received by families with parents commenting that the sessions were fun and enjoyable. Differences between the intervention group and the control group on measures of language and parent/child relationships suggest that the programme may successfully impact children and parent outcomes. These findings mark an exciting first step in establishing the effectiveness of a programme that can make a real difference to children and families and indicate that the programme is a good candidate for further research.

Dr Claudine Bowyer-Crane, Associate Research Director at NIESR and project lead, said *"The results from this study are really encouraging. The quality of the home learning environment is so important for children's development, even more so under Covid-19 restrictions. These preliminary findings suggest that the Talking Together programme could provide families with the support they need to ensure children get off to a good start."*

Sonia Smith, CEO of BHT Early Education and Training, said: *"BHT Early Education and Training are very proud to have been part of a rigorous evaluation looking at the Talking Together Programme. The staff taking part in the evaluation study have gained a wealth of insight and knowledge, and the outcome of the feasibility evaluation has shown the strength of the Talking Together programme. We are proud to have been supporting families with young children, within diverse communities across Bradford, with this programme."*

Dr Josie Dickerson, Director of the Better Start Bradford Innovation Hub, said: *"In Bradford many children need extra support to help with their language development. We know that intervening early in a child's life is key to improving their life chances and reducing inequalities in health and education. However, until now there has been a lack of high-quality research that shows us which interventions will make a*

difference to our children. The findings from this study are very exciting and highlight how research in Bradford is leading the way to give children across the UK the best possible start in life."

Eleanor Ireland, Education Programme Head at the Nuffield Foundation, said *"The home environment is crucial to children's early language development. The findings from this study are an important first step in providing evidence about how the Talking Together programme can successfully support parents of very young children in their homes and provides early evidence of how the programme can help improve children's outcomes."*

ENDS

Notes for editors:

The Nuffield Foundation

The Nuffield Foundation is an independent charitable trust with a mission to advance social well-being. It funds research that informs social policy, primarily in Education, Welfare, and Justice. It also funds student programmes that provide opportunities for young people to develop skills in quantitative and scientific methods. The Nuffield Foundation is the founder and co-funder of the Nuffield Council on Bioethics, the Ada Lovelace Institute and the Nuffield Family Justice Observatory. The Foundation has funded this project, but the views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily the Foundation. Visit www.nuffieldfoundation.org

Better Start Bradford

Better Start Bradford is funded by The National Lottery Community Fund to help children in Bowling and Barkerend, Bradford Moor and Little Horton get the best start in life. They provide more than 20 projects for pregnant women and families with children aged 0-3. The projects will help to improve children's emotional, and social development, communication and language development and nutrition. More information about Better Start Bradford can be found at www.betterstartbradford.org.uk



For queries and to arrange interviews, please contact the NIESR Press Office: press@niesr.ac.uk / l.pieri@niesr.ac.uk / 07930 544 631

Further details of NIESR's activities can be seen on <http://www.niesr.ac.uk> or by contacting enquiries@niesr.ac.uk Switchboard Telephone Number: +44 (0) 207 222 7665