

Cost
£££££

Evidence strength


Impact (months)
+5

Effect size
0.38

What is it?

Early years or early childhood interventions aim to ensure that young children have educational pre-school or nursery experiences which prepare them for school and academic success. The research summarised here concentrates on the impact of 'packages' of early years provision (known as multi-component programmes) rather than on individual early years interventions. Many of the researched programmes and approaches focus on disadvantaged children. Some also offer parental support.

For more information about the impact of different aspects of early years provision please see the [Early Years Toolkit](#).

How effective is it?

Overall, the evidence suggests that early years and pre-school interventions have a positive impact, delivering an average of around five additional months' progress. The approach appears to be particularly beneficial for children from low income families.

Once early years provision is in place, improving the quality of provision, for example by training staff to improve the interaction between staff and children, appears to be more promising than increasing the quantity of provision (by providing extra hours in the day), or changing the physical environment of early years settings.

In most studies, the impact on attainment tends to reduce over time, although the time this takes varies by approach. This means that even interventions which are effective in narrowing the attainment gap between disadvantaged children and their peers will not be sufficient to prevent the gap opening up again in later years. Where an impact on attitudes to school has been found, it tends to be more lasting.

Evidence of early years interventions showed a positive impact on young children cognitive and social skills. Studies in Jordan, UAE, Oman, Sudan, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia reported that Early Childhood Education (ECE) programs are approaches that provide young children with kindergarten experiences necessary to construct their views on self and others.

However, researchers have highlighted the necessity for teachers to participate in professional development that would provide them with the most recent teaching approaches to maximize children's engagement and ability to learn and stimulate their creative and reasoning skills.

To date, research in early years intervention is limited in this region despite the reported benefits. More research is needed in this area, including longitudinal and experimental to examine the impact of ECE programs on young children academic and non-academic skills.

How secure is the evidence?

There are a number of systematic reviews and meta-analyses which have looked at the impact of early childhood intervention. Most of these are from the USA, however, where children tend to start school at a relatively late age.

What are the costs?

Understandably the costs are very high, as adult/child ratios in pre-school provision tend to be higher than in school classes. Family interventions have similarly high costs. The average cost per child of a Sure Start Local Programme was 1,300.0 GBP (1,672.3 USD, 1,185.7 JOD) in 2009–2010, so the estimates are in the region of 1,000.0 GBP to 2,000.0 GBP (1,286.4 USD to 2,572.8 USD, 912.0 JOD to 1,824.1 JOD) per child. The average annual cost of sending a child over the age of two to a nursery is about 5,800.0 GBP (7,461.0 USD, 5,289.9 JOD).

Costs originally calculated in GBP; USD and JOD calculated via oanda.com on 22/09/20.

As yet there is no information about local costs.

What should I consider?

High quality provision with well-qualified and well-trained staff is essential.

High quality provision is likely to be characterised by the development of positive relationships between staff and children and by engagement of the children in activities which support pre-

reading, the development of early number concepts and non-verbal reasoning.

Extended attendance (one year or more) and an earlier starting age (three years old) are more likely to have an impact than shorter periods starting later, which deliver lower benefits on average.

Disadvantaged children benefit from high quality programmes, especially where these include a mixture of children from different social backgrounds and a strong educational component.

Copyright © [The Education Endowment Foundation](#). All rights reserved.