

Last reviewed: July 2016

Intervention website: No website

GUIDEBOOK INTERVENTION INFORMATION SHEET

Let's Play in Tandem

Please note that in the 'Intervention summary' table below, 'child age', 'level of need', and 'race and ethnicities' information is **as evaluated in studies**. Information in other fields describes the intervention as **offered/supported by the intervention provider**.

Intervention summary	
Description	Let's Play in Tandem is a school-readiness intervention for families living in socially disadvantaged communities with a child aged 3 years old. It is delivered by a project worker to families for a period of 12 months. It aims to improve children's cognitive development and self-regulation by delivering educational activities designed to develop pre-reading and numerical skills and promote vocabulary and general knowledge. The activities are demonstrated by the project worker to the family during visits and are designed to facilitate one-on-one verbal interaction and to teach parents key scaffolding skills, including how to prompt, provide instructions, and encourage their child.
Evidence rating	3
Cost rating	3
Child outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting children's mental health and wellbeing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved social and emotional development. • Enhancing school achievement and employment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved maths ability - Improved literacy - Improved speech, language and communication - Improved early learning. • Preventing crime, violence and antisocial behaviour <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved self-regulation.
Child age (population characteristic)	3 years old

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Intervention summary	
Level of need (population characteristic)	Targeted Selected
Race and ethnicities (population characteristic)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Asian• White.
Type (model characteristic)	Home visiting
Setting (model characteristic)	Home
Workforce (model characteristic)	Project worker
UK available?	Yes
UK tested?	Yes

Model description

Let's Play in Tandem is a school-readiness intervention designed for families with children aged 3 years old, living in socially disadvantaged communities. The intervention aims to enhance children's cognitive development and self-regulation, preparing them for success in school.

The intervention spans 12 months and is typically delivered through Sure Start Children's Centres.

Each participating family is assigned a project worker, who visits the home weekly for 90 to 120 minutes. During these visits, the project worker delivers a set of three educational activities focused on developing pre-reading and numeracy skills, as well as promoting vocabulary and general knowledge.

The project worker demonstrates these activities to the family, guiding them through one-on-one verbal interactions. The activities are designed not only to engage the child, but also to empower

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parents with essential scaffolding techniques. These include prompting, providing instructions, and encouraging their child's participation.

Target population

Age of child	3 years
Target population	Preschoolers living in socially disadvantaged communities

Please note that the information in this section on target population is as **offered/supported by the intervention provider**.



Theory of change

Why		Who	How	What		
Science-based assumption	Science-based assumption	Science-based assumption	Intervention	Short-term outcomes	Medium-term outcomes	Long-term outcomes
Children from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds often have lower levels of school readiness due to reduced parental support for early learning.	Let's Play in Tandem is based on the assumption that school readiness can be improved by targeting cognitive development and cognitive self-regulation. Research suggests that structured early learning experiences and parental involvement can enhance children's foundational skills, better preparing them for school.	Let's Play in Tandem is designed for families, specifically parents and their young children living in socially disadvantaged areas. The intervention aims to equip parents with the skills necessary to support their children's early cognitive and academic development.	Families learn through activities, which are intended to develop pre-reading skills (e.g. phonological awareness, perceptual discrimination), basic numerical skills (e.g. understanding of size and quantity, counting to 10), and the child's general knowledge.	Let's Play in Tandem aims to develop parents' scaffolding skills (e.g. prompting; providing instructions; encouragement) that foster the child's learning with regards to numeracy, reading, and vocabulary.	In the medium term, the intervention expects to strengthen the child's cognitive self-regulation and improve their early learning skills. It also aims to enhance the interaction between parents and children, which contributes to better learning dynamics.	In the long term, Let's Play in Tandem intends to improve children's academic performance.



Implementation requirements

Who is eligible?	Preschoolers living in socially disadvantaged communities.
How is it delivered?	Let's Play in Tandem is delivered in over 40 sessions of one hours' duration each by one practitioner to families.
What happens during the intervention?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual families are assigned a project worker who visits the family in their home each week for 90 to 120 minutes. • Project workers deliver a pack of three educational activities to develop pre-reading and numerical skills and promote vocabulary and general knowledge. • The activities are demonstrated by the project worker to the family during visits and are designed to facilitate one-on-one verbal interaction and to teach parents key scaffolding skills, including how to prompt, provide instructions, and encourage their child. • The activities specifically focus on school readiness in terms of children's knowledge (name, address, colours), numeracy, listening, and communication.
Who can deliver it?	The practitioner who delivers this intervention is a practitioner.
What are the training requirements?	The practitioners have 35 hours of intervention training. Booster training of practitioners is not required.
How are practitioners supervised?	It is recommended that practitioners are supervised by three supervisors (two from the host agency and one intervention developer supervisor).
What are the systems for maintaining fidelity?	Intervention fidelity is maintained through the following processes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face-to-face training • Supervision • Other printed material.
Is there a licensing requirement?	No
*Contact details	Contact person: Ruth Ford Email address: ruth.ford@aru.ac.uk *Please note that this information may not be up to date. In this case, please visit the listed intervention website for up to date contact details.



Evidence summary

Let's Play in Tandem's most rigorous evidence comes from one RCT conducted in the UK consistent with Foundations' Level 3 evidence strength threshold.

Children in the intervention group demonstrated statistically significant improvements in knowledge, pre-reading, and numerical skills immediately post-intervention. At the four-month follow-up, further significant improvements were observed in listening and communication, responsiveness to stimuli, writing, mathematics, personal and social skills, vocabulary, and inhibitory control.

Let's play in Tandem can be described as evidence-based: it has evidence from at least one rigorously conducted RCT or QED demonstrating a statistically significant positive impact on at least one child outcome.

Child outcomes			
Outcome	Improvement index	Interpretation	Study
Improved personal and social skills	+20	0.3-point improvement on the personal and social skills subscale of the Four Counties Phase Profile – 4 months later	1
Improved knowledge	N/A	Improvement on measures of academic ability in nursery - Immediately after intervention	1
Improved pre-reading skills	N/A	Improvement on measures of academic ability in nursery – Immediately after intervention	1
Improved numerical skills	N/A	Improvement on measures of academic ability in nursery – Immediately after intervention	1
Improved listening and communication	+25	0.6-point improvement on the listening and communication subscale of the Four Counties Phase Profile – 4 months later	1



Improved writing	+28	0.6-point improvement on the writing subscale of the Four Counties Phase Profile – 4 months later	1
Improved mathematics	+33	0.7-point improvement on the mathematics subscale of the Four Counties Phase Profile – 4 months later	1
Improved vocabulary	+26	7.8-point improvement on the British Picture Vocabulary Scales – 4 months later	1
Improved inhibitory control	N/A	Improvement on measures of inhibitory control developed by Carlson & Moses – four months later	1

Search and review

	Number of studies
Identified in search	2
Studies reviewed	2
Meeting the L2 threshold	0
Meeting the L3 threshold	1
Contributing to the L4 threshold	0
Ineligible	1



Individual study summary: Study 1

Study 1	
Study design	RCT
Country	UK
Sample characteristics	73 preschoolers (aged 3) and their parents living in low-income families in Wales
Race, ethnicities, and nationalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 90% White • 10% Asian.
Population risk factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants were recruited from districts with severe social and economic deprivation. • Around half of the children came from families headed by young, single mothers, with most relying on unemployment or sickness benefits. • In 85% of families, the primary caregiver left school by age 16, and most families lived on council estates.
Timing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baseline • Post-intervention • 4 months post-intervention.
Child outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved personal and social skills (teacher report) • Improved knowledge (direct assessment) • Improved pre-reading skills (direct assessment) • Improved numerical skills (direct assessment) • Improved listening and communication (teacher report) • Improved writing (teacher report) • Improved mathematics (teacher report) • Improved vocabulary (direct assessment) • Improved inhibitory control (direct assessment).
Other outcomes	None
Study Rating	3
Citation	Ford, R., McDougall, S. & Evans, D. (2009) Parent-delivered compensatory education for children at risk of educational failure: Improving the academic and self-regulatory skills of a Sure Start preschool sample. <i>British Journal of Psychology</i> . 100, 773–798.



Brief summary

Population characteristics

This study involved 60 preschoolers (aged 3) living in low-income families in Wales. Participants were recruited from districts with severe social and economic deprivation. Around half of the children came from families headed by young, single mothers, with most relying on unemployment or sickness benefits. In 85% of families, the primary caregiver left school by age 16, and most families lived on council estates. Most participants were White (90%), with a smaller proportion of Asian participants (10%).

Study design

36 participants were randomly assigned to the treatment group and 37 to a no-intervention control group via a lottery conducted by the university researchers where families were grouped according to child's age and gender, intended school, highest level of education of the primary caregiver, and whether the family had any paid employment. Families in the control group were encouraged to attend other Sure Start services operating in their area such as play groups and the mobile toy library. The final sample consisted of 60 participants (30 in the treatment group and 30 in the control group) following attrition in the intervention group. There were no baseline differences between the two groups.

Measurement

Assessments took place at post-intervention and four months post-intervention

Post-intervention

- **Researcher led** measures included the Nursery tests of academic ability.

Four months post-intervention

- **Researcher led** measures included British Picture Vocabulary Scale, the Digits Forward subtest of the British Ability Scales, Carlson and Moses test, the Sally-Ann test, deceptive-box test and Linda's false belief test.
- **Teacher report** measures included the Four Counties Foundation Phase Profile.

Study retention

Post-intervention

60 children (82%) participated in post-intervention assessment, representing 83% (30) of intervention participants and 81% (30) of control group participants.

Four months post-intervention

60 children (82%) participated in post-intervention assessment, representing 83% (30) of intervention participants and 81% (30) of control group participants.



Results

Data-analytic strategy

Regression analyses was used to assess the interventions effectiveness on the intended outcomes. The approach to missing data was not specified.

Findings

Children in the intervention group demonstrated statistically significant improvements in knowledge, pre-reading, and numerical skills immediately post-intervention. At the four-month follow-up, further significant improvements were observed in listening and communication, responsiveness to stimuli, writing, mathematics, personal and social skills, vocabulary, and inhibitory control.

Study 1: Outcomes table

Outcome	Measure	Effect size	Statistical significance	Number of participants	Measurement time point
Child outcomes					
Knowledge	Nursery tests of academic ability (direct assessment)	N/A	Yes	60	Post-intervention
Pre-reading skills	Nursery tests of academic ability (direct assessment)	N/A	Yes	60	Post-intervention
Numerical skills	Nursery tests of academic ability (direct assessment)	N/A	Yes	60	Post-intervention
Listening and communication	Four Counties Foundation Phase Profile (teacher report)	N/A	Yes	60	4 months post-intervention



Outcome	Measure	Effect size	Statistical significance	Number of participants	Measurement time point
Responding to stimuli	Four Counties Foundation Phase Profile (teacher report)	N/A	Yes	60	4 months post-intervention
Reading	Four Counties Foundation Phase Profile (teacher report)	N/A	No	60	4 months post-intervention
Writing	Four Counties Foundation Phase Profile (teacher report)	N/A	Yes	60	4 months post-intervention
Number	Four Counties Foundation Phase Profile (teacher report)	N/A	No	60	4 months post-intervention
Mathematics	Four Counties Foundation Phase Profile (teacher report)	N/A	Yes	60	4 months post-intervention
Personal and social skills	Four Counties Foundation Phase Profile (teacher report)	N/A	Yes	60	4 months post-intervention
Vocabulary	British Picture Vocabulary Scale (direct assessment)	N/A	Yes	60	4 months post-intervention



Outcome	Measure	Effect size	Statistical significance	Number of participants	Measurement time point
Short-term memory	Digits Forward subtest of the British Ability Scales (direct assessment)	N/A	No	60	4 months post-intervention
Inhibitory control	Carlson and Moses test (direct assessment)	N/A	Yes	60	4 months post-intervention
Theory of mind	Sally-Ann test, deceptive-box test and Linda's false belief test (direct assessment)	N/A	No	60	4 months post-intervention

Other studies

The following studies were identified for this intervention but did not count towards the intervention's overall evidence rating. An intervention receives the same rating as its most robust study or studies.

Ford, R., Evans, D. & McDougall, S. (2003) Progressing in Tandem: A Sure Start initiative for enhancing the role of parents in children's early education. *Educational and Child Psychology*. 20, 81–96. **This reference refers to a pre-post study, conducted in the UK.**

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Note on provider involvement: This provider has agreed to Foundations' terms of reference (or the Early Intervention Foundation's terms of reference), and the assessment has been conducted and published with the full cooperation of the intervention provider.