



October 2021

# Doubling Down

## Summary Evaluation Report

Commissioned by:



Funded by:



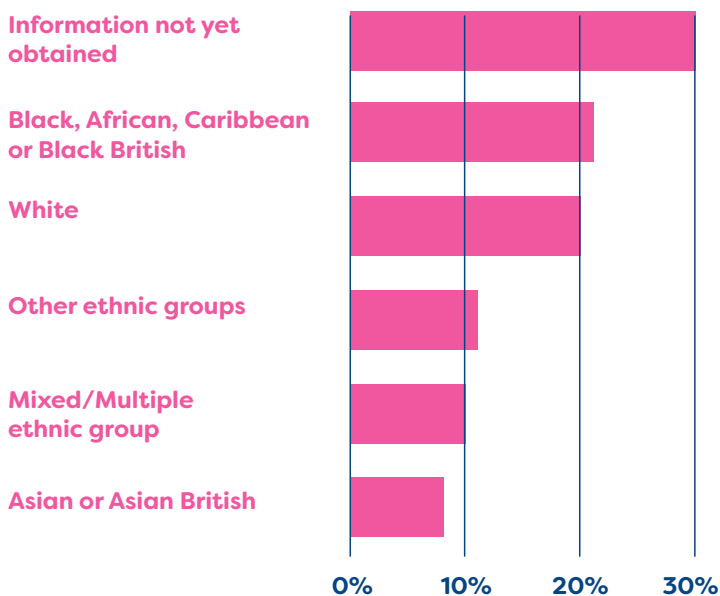
# Programme Summary



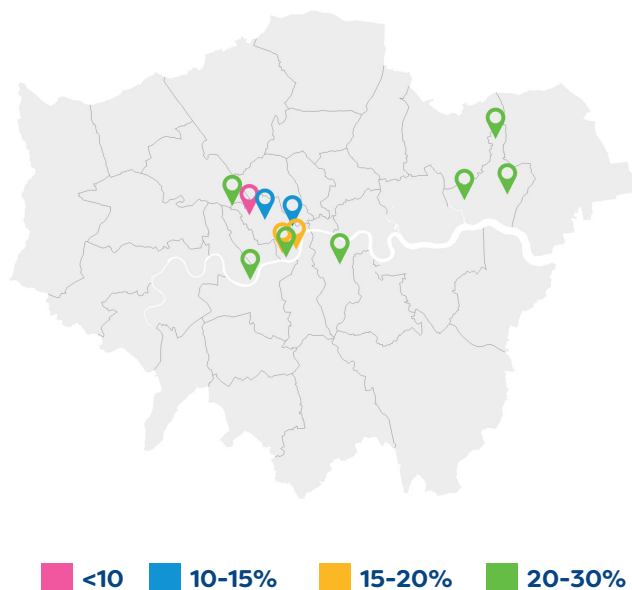
In response to witnessing children arriving at nursery ‘hungry, anxious and developmentally delayed’, London Early Years Foundation (LEYF) offered free additional hours plus a daily hot meal to children most in need from October 2020. The programme was called Doubling Down.

This programme doubles the Government-funded hours of early childhood education and care (ECEC) for its most vulnerable children from **15 hours per week** up to **30 hours per week**.

## Ethnic diversity of children in the programme



## % of children living in deprivation (IDACI) based on nursery location



**97**

children supported over 3 terms

**47**  
MONTHS

average age of children taking part (months)

**£2k**

estimated cost per child, per term for the full 15-hour programme

**12**

nurseries

“I was absolutely overwhelmed [when I got the offer]... absolutely elated. I can’t thank them enough, whoever’s done this for me.” Parent

**51** **46**  
MALE FEMALE

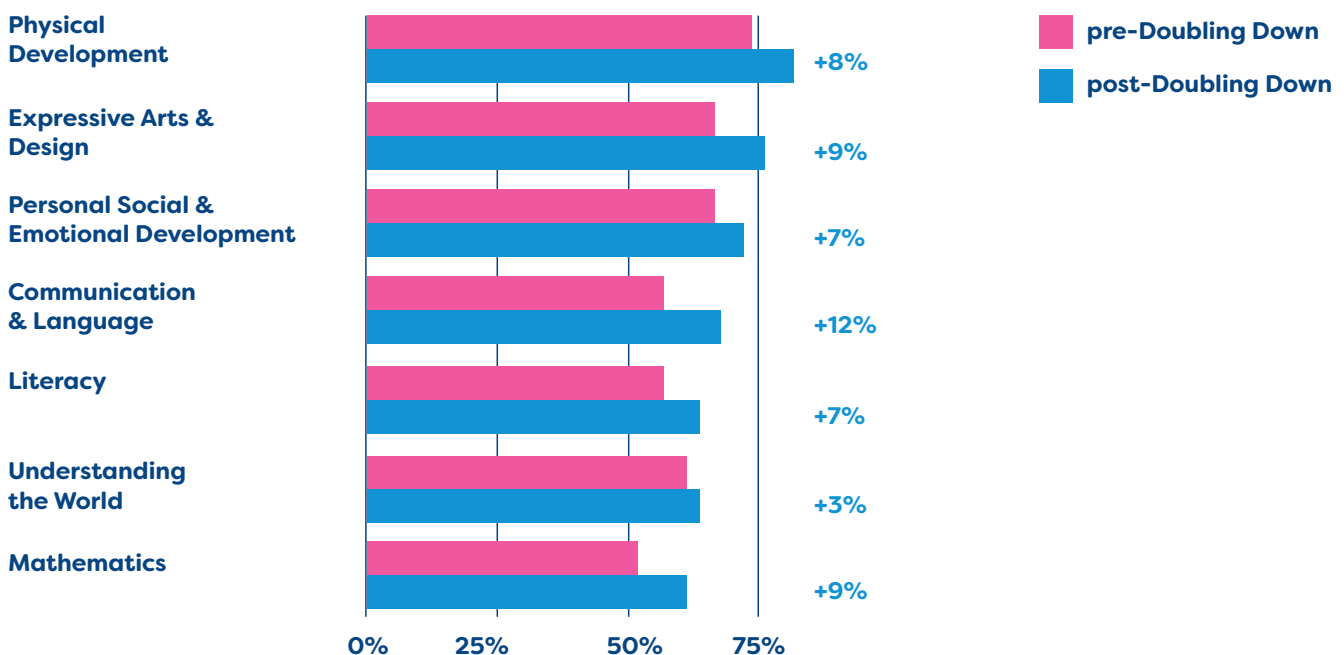
# Impact on vulnerable children

There was, on average, an 8% increase in expected levels of development in children across the seven areas of Learning & Development from EYFS for children taking part in Doubling Down.

Reaching expected levels of development across learning areas was associated with using more hours during the Doubling Down programme.



Percentage of children at expected level of development across EYFS areas of Learning & Development



“She has special educational needs and before [Doubling Down], she was completely non-verbal. She left the nursery at the end of this term to go to school. Her confidence was amazing, she will speak her mind, state her opinion, state her choices, she will express her ideas. **Because she was seeing us in the nursery so much more.**”



# Feedback from staff and parents

Over 70% of parents and staff consulted saw positive impacts in communication skills, social development and behaviour as a result of participation in Doubling Down.

The programme was also found to positively impact on children's mood, sleep, empathy, school readiness, nutritious eating, amount of screen time and exposure to outdoor areas.

90%

of staff saw improvements in children's behaviour.

Increased hours helped build routine, supporting positive behaviour.

“Her behaviour has improved. Her sentences are clearer. She asks curiosity questions. When you know more, you ask more. Her personality has developed. Her knowledge has widened.”

77%

of parents saw improvements in their child's mood.

Staff felt children were happier at nursery as a result of Doubling Down.

“They are happier because they spend more time in nursery with their friends, especially children who would attend 15 hours and go home and spend time in front of the TV or tablets.”

85%

of parents and staff saw improvements in communication skills

Nursery is a language-rich environment – staff saw a big improvement in children's speech from being on the programme.

“We had one child who wouldn't talk at all... she started attending Monday to Friday. Two months afterwards, she started to speak English. She started singing. Her confidence built up.”

# Impact on parents and families

All parents and carers interviewed were grateful for having their children on the programme and were very keen to see it continue for other families with similar needs.

The programme resulted in benefits for parents and carers, including improvements in health and wellbeing, engagement with home learning, access to education and employment, and stronger staff/parent relationships.



77%

of parents said their health and wellbeing had improved.

The programme was particularly beneficial for parents and carers of children with Special Educational Needs:

“It’s like the world’s been lifted off their shoulders.” – Staff member

85%

of staff thought parents were more engaged with the home learning environment.

Improved engagement with the home learning environment has helped to accelerate the children’s pace of learning.

“That time period was just perfect for me, I was able to get therapy. I also managed to get a part-time job to deal with my finances, which were in a bad state. **It allowed me to live again to be honest.**”

## Impact on staff

The programme had a positive impact on staff confidence, ability to do learning activities with vulnerable children and job satisfaction.

Improvements in pedagogical competence increased the positive impact that extra hours made on the children taking part in Doubling Down.

Some staff said that the programme improved their colleagues' confidence in supporting vulnerable children through being able to spend more time with them. This was particularly the case in nurseries that had previously had mostly fee-paying children.



“It’s been amazing to be able to deliver that to parents during such a hard time, and to such vulnerable children – I feel very privileged to have been part of it.”

“I think, just generally, for us as teachers to see them progress, to be able to challenge them and to see how it affected them. **We could see a difference in their behaviour, social skills, vocabulary.** It was really nice to see the impact that this had on them. It’s just so nice to be able to do this for children throughout the whole week.”



## Conclusions and recommendations

The Doubling Down programme has shown to be **beneficial for vulnerable children, their parents and staff**; increased participation leads to **improved outcomes for children**, supports parents to better manage their lives and increases staff satisfaction and confidence to support vulnerable children.



This evidence strongly suggests that the programme should be extended within LEYF or become a mainstream offer from the Government.

Offering extended hours for vulnerable children has led to a **range of improvements in their development**, including improved communication skills, social development, behaviour and school readiness.

The programme had additional benefits for children such as improved nutrition and sleep. Doubling Down had **particular benefits for children with special educational needs**.

Parents and carers also benefitted, with many feeling that **it was the 'lifeline' that was desperately needed**, allowing them to take time for themselves, look after their mental health and improve their employment prospects.

**Staff job satisfaction increased** as a result of Doubling Down, as staff could see that the additional hours were having an impact on children's development. Staff confidence in supporting vulnerable children also increased.



London Early Years Foundation (LEYF) is a family of 39 nurseries across London. We are a charitable social enterprise employing over 800 staff across London. Our socially inclusive approach ensures we make a real difference to the lives of nearly 4,000 children and their families every year, helping them to develop a passion for learning, regardless of their background.

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