



“Let’s talk about the Early Years Conversation Project”



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My name is Iman Al-Saiq, and I have been working in Early Years education for over 10 years. I am currently based at Oaklington Manor Nursery, where I love supporting children as they grow and explore. Some of the highlights of my role include sharing captivating stories, discovering the wonders of nature alongside the children, and designing fun, creative activities that inspire their imagination. Watching them learn and develop every day is the most rewarding part of what I do.



A conversation with an EYCP Champion

“We have new strategies, so we can help children in ways that are more effective.”

Iman Al-Saiq, EYCP Champion.

This blog is a part of a series focussing on the experiences of participants in The Early Years Conversation Project. The [Early Years Conversation Project](#) (EYCP) is a programme designed and delivered by the [East London Research School](#) (ELRS) and funded by the [Education Endowment Foundation](#) (EEF) and the DfE through [A Brighter Start - East London’s Early Years Stronger Practice Hub](#). It aims to develop the interactions of practitioners with children, to improve the communication and language skills of two and three year olds.

Iman Al-Saiq an EYCP Champion. As a champion, Iman is the practitioner in her setting who advocates for and leads the EYCP programme.

I wanted to get a feel of Iman’s participation in the EYCP programme.

We talked ...

What attracted you to being a Champion on the EYCP?

I wanted to be a Champion because I believe that the EYCP enables us to work more effectively with children. It gives us new ideas for how we can help them learn and grow.

I wanted others in my team to see the value of the EYCP and how the [ShREC strategies](#) really improve practice.

What would you say is the most important quality a champion needs to have?

I think a Champion needs 2 main qualities - to be *patient* and *supportive*.

It takes time for practitioners to learn about new ways of working and they need to feel that they will get the encouragement and help they need. It can be hard to change and adjust our ways sometimes.

Since implementing the EYCP, can you name the greatest change that you've seen in daily practice?

The biggest change I've seen is how much more confident we are when working with children. We have new strategies now, so we can help children in ways that are more effective.

Of the strategies used, which would you say has most influence on changing practice?

I think it's observing children carefully and learning how to understand them.

If we share attention with the children and respond sensitively to them like it says in the [ShREC approach](#), we work at their level. We can then assess how they need us to support them.

Can you give an example of an interaction with a child that shows the EYCP in action?

Yes! I was working with a shy child who didn't speak very much. I sat alongside her and learned to give her more time and space, using simple words to describe her play. I then began to [read books with her](#) every day which seemed to make her more confident - she now talks to me about the pictures, pointing too. Over time, she's become a lot more comfortable about sharing her ideas with the other children too.

What was your main challenge as a Champion?

My main challenge was getting everyone to feel comfortable with new ways of working. Some people felt unsure or worried about the changes. I had to keep encouraging them and showing them how it helps the children.

What have been the barriers to making changes?

One barrier has been *time*. We're all very busy, so finding time to learn and try new things can be hard.

Making changes to our established routines was tricky at times too, but we got there in the end.

How would you like to see the EYCP develop?

I would love to see more training and resources for Champions.

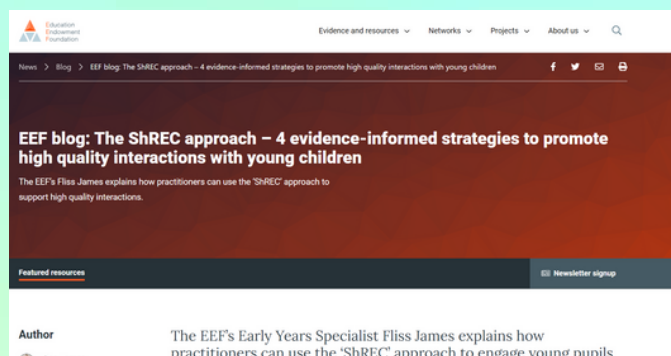
Is there any final comment you'd like to make about the programme?

I just want to say that I think the EYCP is a great programme. It helps us connect with children in deeper ways. It's so rewarding to see the positive impact on both children and staff.

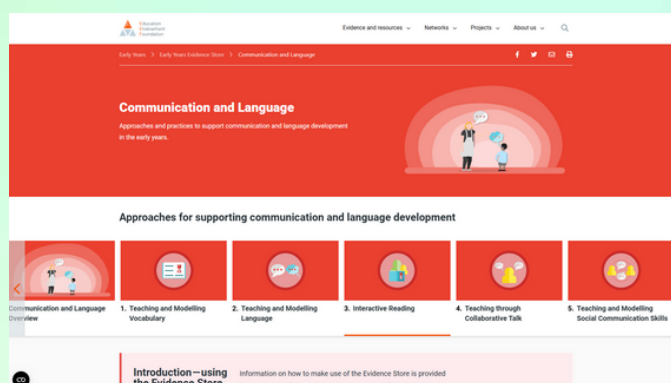
By Caroline Vollans

Further reading:

[The ShREC approach – 4 evidence-informed strategies to promote high quality interactions with young children](#)



[Early Years Evidence Store: Interactive Reading](#)



[Improving early education through high-quality interactions](#)

