

Is communication and language development an inequalities issue for children in Lambeth?: Comparing developmental milestones of 5-year-olds in the LEAP wards with the rest of Lambeth

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INTRODUCTION

Lambeth Early Action Partnership (LEAP) is a programme to better the lives of children in four wards of Lambeth (Stockwell, Coldharbour, Vassall and Tulse Hill). LEAP aims to support the communication and language development (CLD) of children in the area, as well as their social and emotional development and diet and nutrition. CLD at 5 is an outcome we can measure to provide an indication of the CLD needs of our community.

The percentage of reception children in Lambeth reaching at least expected CLD has increased in recent years: 80% for 2017/18. However, proportionately fewer children living in the LEAP wards reach at least expected CLD than children from other Lambeth wards.

↔ The four wards were selected for A Better Start because they showed greatest need in priority outcome areas.

📈 Early language acquisition impacts on all aspects of young children's development (Early Intervention Foundation (EIF), 2017).

💡 LEAP aims to effect positive change in these areas.

AIM

💡 Understand more about the differences in CLD between reception-age children who live in the LEAP area and those who do not, and any inequalities that underpin this.

❓ Consider what this means for the LEAP programme and wider early years strategy.

METHODS

- Validation of submitted EYFS data for multi-year analysis 2012/13 – 2017/18 (6 years).
- Geographical comparison based on child residence (LEAP Vs Non-LEAP). Non-Lambeth residents excluded.
- Analysis of EYFS data for reception:

📖 Descriptive – Residence, sex, ethnicity, pupil premium status, term of birth.

⚙️ Analytical – Linear regression by residence, sex, ethnic groups, pupil premium status and term of birth/ multiple regression analysis.

WHAT THE DATA TOLD US?

Descriptive

A smaller proportion of children achieved at least expected CLD in the LEAP wards compared to non-LEAP (3% gap) between 2012/13 and 2017/18. Wards with fewer children achieving at least expected CLD tend to also be wards with a greater proportion of children eligible for pupil premium. Children eligible for pupil premium are 1.6 times more likely to live in a LEAP ward than a non-LEAP ward.

Multiple regression

LEAP resident pupils are less likely to reach at least expected CLD compared to non-LEAP (Lambeth) residents ($p < 0.0001$).

All ethnic sub-groups are less likely to reach at least expected CLD compared to White British pupils across Lambeth (all $p < 0.0001$). Portuguese pupils are 4.7 times less likely to reach at least expected CLD than White British pupils ($p < 0.0001$).

Differences in ethnic groups are not significant or have low significance when analysis includes only children eligible for pupil premium.

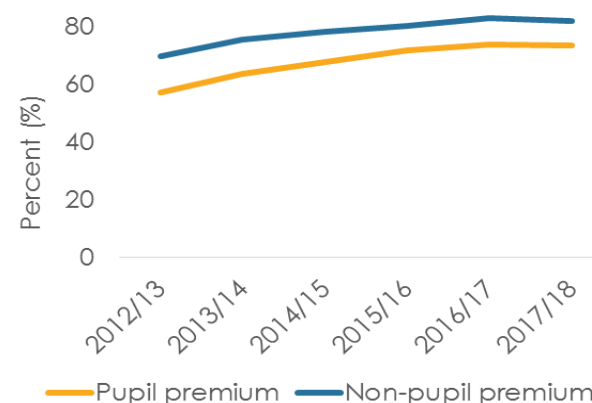
Pupil premium status is significantly associated with CLD across Lambeth, children eligible for pupil premium are 1.8 times less likely to reach at least expected CLD ($p < 0.0001$).

Linear regression

There were no significant trends in the linear regression analysis. However, the direction of travel suggests that gaps in communication and language development for children in Lambeth are maintained over time when focusing on ward of residence (LEAP/non-LEAP) pupil premium status and ethnic groups.

Proportion of children reaching at least expected CLD		
Year	Pupil premium	Non-pupil premium
2012/13	57.2%	70.0%
2013/14	63.9%	75.7%
2014/15	68.0%	78.3%
2015/16	71.9%	80.4%
2016/18	74.0%	83.1%
2017/18	73.7%	82.1%

	Category	Odds ratio	95% conf. limit	
			LCI	UCI
Residence	Non-LEAP		Reference	
	LEAP	1.20	1.10	1.30
Ethnic sub-groups	White British		Reference	
	African	2.49	2.18	2.85
	Other Black	2.55	2.08	3.12
	Other White	2.87	2.48	3.33
	Caribbean	2.21	1.90	2.60
	Portuguese	4.66	3.83	5.66
	Asian	2.52	2.09	3.04
	Mixed	1.79	1.54	2.08
Pupil premium	Non-pupil premium		Reference	
	Pupil premium	1.77	1.63	1.92



KEY MESSAGES

Children from Lambeth are significantly less likely to achieve at least expected CLD if they live in the LEAP wards than non-LEAP Lambeth wards.

Further analysis revealed that children eligible for pupil premium are significantly less likely to achieve at least expected CLD in reception than children not eligible for pupil premium, and children of non-White British background are significantly less likely to achieve expected CLD than their White British peers.

The LEAP wards have a greater percentage of children eligible for pupil premium and a greater percentage of children from African, Caribbean and Portuguese backgrounds than other wards in Lambeth. These differences could help to explain the variation seen for LEAP children.

Early language development plays a key role in child wellbeing [EIF, 2017] and there are a number of supportive factors linked to language development such as positive home learning environment and higher income, 'whereas early experiences of disadvantage may place children at a developmental risk' [EIF 2018]. Further research could enhance our understanding of how social disadvantage and where families live interact to impact children's communication and language development.

Where disadvantage exists, the more likely that learning gaps will manifest and amplify as children grow older [EPI, 2019]. It is vital to tackle the developmental impact of social disadvantage as early as possible to support positive outcomes and reduce inequality for children in the LEAP wards and beyond.

WHAT IS LEAP DOING?

There is a comprehensive communication and language workstream offered in the LEAP wards.

LEAP's suite of services support children from as early as infancy and continue throughout the early years via a network of interventions, child, parental and family support, workforce development and community action.

Our approach seeks to create a language-rich environment indoors and outdoors and enhance existing provisions through:

- Effective adult engagement and interactions to support children's language and communication
- Practitioner training to identify children with speech and language needs as early as possible and support parents in recognising their children's needs and how to seek help
- Supporting parents to provide quality home learning environments.

Find out more about our communication and language programme of work here: <http://www.leaplambeth.org.uk>

Set up with funding from The National Lottery Community Fund, LEAP is part of the "Better Start" initiative for families from pregnancy until their child is four.