ToWe project

Focus group 1

15 May 2016

**H: Thank you for coming. First question is about training week and materials. After the training week and using the material so far, what is the benefit impact on your knowledge and understanding?**

T: Well, it was nice to see that something we are already doing – and doing forward - would be beneficial to the toddlers and the children that we work with. It is quite nice to (have it ticked off as the right thing to do??) and it was also interesting for us that , “look we could do that, we could do that” and implementing those in our practice straight away in some cases.

**Y: How do the training enhance your knowledge on some of the areas that you looked at in some of the outputs?**

T: It was nice to see some things going on that I have already read about in some books and things I have already seen in practice with videos, hearing from international perspectives on the child care and attitudes towards child learning and development, I found it particularly interesting and illuminating. There are things we can do straight away and things we as a centre could implement over a longer period of time.

K:I would agree with Tom and there is a lot of previous knowledge, previous learning from before that has come back again through this that has made me think “Yeah, I know this but I need to look at this again”

T: Yeah cause I mean the nature of the job and the way that we are trained and things, having done for so many years you do bits of training here, a bit of training there, a bit of qualification here and a bit of qualification there and they become engrained in your practice and then when you see it you realise “Yes that is why we do that. It is kind of thicking off or try to find it or whatever you like to call it”.

3: I found the meal times particularly interesting, cause I know when I started it at the centre that I am at now, snack café was already embedded within the practice, that have been set off by the speech and language therapist and it was like “this is the way we were doing it” and it is wonderful, but this made us kind of go back and re-evaluate and really think about why we are doing it and if there are ways that it can be tweaked that are more suitable to our setting, which was really nice.

T: whenever ever we are gonna be able to achieve all of the extremely desirable…

3: the audit for that is specific for a nursery where there is full day care where they are all sitting down and having lunch, whereas we do not have lunch at the centre; it is just a snack

T: with toddlers and parents present, as well as us

3 Yeah we may not always have a member of staff present or deployed at the snack café, because thigs happen in other areas or rooms that you end up… you want a member of staff to be at the snack café but it is not always possible, so that when you come back to the snack café you can see that things are not happening the way they should. Especially the nature of our role, the context within the children centre, you have got the parents, you know the parents let a lot of things to happen that you wouldn’t necessary allowed to happen in nursery; for instance you have children bringing toys, so on the snack table you have toys sitting that might have been in the sand tray, so you try to help them remove this toys or putting them on the floor until you have finished the snack, things like that.

K: For me that is one of the biggest impact. We are looking at this project now and we are thinking: “right we are a small staff team, there aren’t many of us, but we have got a room full of parents”, so we are trying to view them as our practitioners and upskill them at the same time, which fingers crossed will work I think.

A:For me who I support and oversee all the settings, we know that the introduction of snack café with a particular focus because last year was very successful and we are now at a time when we need to keep that focus going; for me as K said we are looking at it again and we can add to it, not just from a communication and language perspective, but all the other things that are contained in the audit, so it’s come a really good time to look at the practice across all settings and to share the findings from the audit, from the particular chosen settings if you like.

**H: You have looked at the meal time. Have you looked at any of the other training materials?**

T: not in any great... We were really focusing on meal time (intellectual output 5) in our setting at the moment.

**Y: Have you moved forward with IO5/palns to move it forward?**

We do. We tried to print them off but the printer didn’t work today.

*Participants talking at the same time.*

**Y: What have you found then? Are yuo able to share at all?**

T: What is really meaningful for our setting is that we kinda decided to go with the idea that the parents are the practitioners in this case and we would be upskilling the parents to bring that level of knowledge and skills that we have got through the research to them, cause that what our stat is all about: giving the parents the skills and the knowledge to interact with the children and helping their children in a way that would be beneficial for them in the years to come; so that is the part we are taking, so the materials we are planning, the things we are trying to implement are about getting the parents to think the way we do, to see it not just as a mealtime but as a learning opportunity about bringing some aspects of their wellbeing and how doing a little thing here at the dinner table than help them learn about something in the years to come, giving them the chance to cut something with a knife helps them with their confidence, giving them the chance to choose something helps their language, things like that, so embedding it from an early age; hopefully they will then do it at home.

We will do that as much as possible through conversation with parents but we are planning different displays, aren’t we?

T: *Nod*

Just as prompts to remind ourselves “oh, let’s tell them about that” but also for them to refer back to so that there is that information up continuously throughout the session so they can just go and have a look

**Y: Do you select parents to work with or…**

T: we have got a list

The group is new. It’s only being running four weeks

T: since Easter. It s on Monday so (incomprehensible)

So we are hoping that the families that come, we want to see if they would continue to come first, we have specifically invited some families

T: One of them came today

**H: Oh fabulous**

So fingers crossed

T: And then normally they do not come to this end of the borough (?) so again they are very needy families who would be to right up straight if someone help them along

J: One question that we are gonna ask, cause we do have a couple of families who have been consistent attenders so far and would be really interested in the project, but are not necessarily our target family, I mean, we have got one mum here who is a teacher who is very knowledgeable about EY, would we involve them in the project?

**H: yes you can because again they’ll be role-modelling . They are not disadvantaged but that does not mean you exclude other toddlers**

T: if we get them on board, they can be the ones that hopefully other parents would look to, they can be the ones doing the modelling when we are not there, cause there is only two of us, we can’t be at the snack café table all the time

J: T and K have gone through the audit, the snack café toddlers wellbeing, and highlighted areas of good practice and poor practice. (With regards to the???) Poor practice there are areas we can develop and we can’t, just by the nature of working with parents. Also - I mean I need to discuss with my manager as well how do we go forward with this – we have got some materials as well on how to be an informing parent, around mealtimes, EY development, milestones etc. I have done a nice display book of photographs, but one thing that does keep coming through, we did ToWe information in other languages and our information that I have just on my noticeboard and the info the speech and language [therapist] we were giving when we set up the café in the first place is all in English and when in the past we tried to identify our three most common languages in the centre we weren’t able to holding on to three, there were about 59 languages which were all equally represented, but it is definitely not good enough that we just have English, although we have got pictures and the pictures can explain what s happening, but it does not explain things like the development, mental milestones and what the expectations are at different ages with children around helping themselves and promoting independence so that is definitely an area that we fall short on in our children centre.

**H: So how do you foresee that you can maybe develop this?**

I don’t know, I think we are gonna have to go back to the drawing board, so we know that the parents who are registered at the children centre, we know what the languages are but maybe there is like a core group who uses the children centre and maybe we can holding on ten languages with those. I mean not everything has to be in every language but...

T What we got in our snack café station is a snack café board, it has got pictures of common fruits, vedges and snacks and things that we have, they have velcro back and about that big - not very big for purposes of the microphone, two playing card side by side, half an A4 - they have got a picture and it says in English at the top and then in one of our community languages at the bottom, with in brackets what languages is. It is a bit for children who speak that language “oh that is my language”; it is also a bit for the children who don’t speak that language to be exposed

And we could do that

T I can e-mail that to you if you like it. I have got a picture of raisin and there is “raisin” at the top of…

We just have the words, but again speech and language… so like this is a picture of an apple. It says apple in English

*People talking at the same time, incomprehensible*

It wouldn’t take much, like you said…

Sorry I am surprised that the team have not distributed those to all team, cause I saw this around before

T: The other team are very tight. In the end I made my own. I have got those things around the edge, I have got those printed on separate little things… so that we can move around; however things like hard, crunchy, juicy, sweet, sour… that’s on separate things. Lot of the kids love to bring it down “oh it is an apple”, “I have got an apple here” and make a juicy apple.

That s what you need to do. On my display I put things like this… *[show pictures to the other participants]* so for instance this one is “teachers to wash your hands before eating” and then “wash his hands but needs adult supervision when dry”. The age you would expect a child to be able to wash the hands and dry with some supervision is 3 years. Wash and dry hands, age 4 years. Before that they would need a lot of…

So you know what’s expected

We have got this up and this pictures…

T: I can forward you the snack café stuff if you like… it s a PDF I have saved so

We can obviously seek out resources and support you, can’t we? We can all gather together. Is there any project money to purchase anything like that?

**H: No, no. You have got the money for the time. You only got the project money to support you to disseminate and to run the project**

Resourcing itself is not part of it. We’ll get together. It is useful to know. It really shows… between us we can share

**H: and also you can share. I mean, that’s the thing. So maybe the challenge is about getting together and sharing. There is anything else challenging or relevant, or anything that is not challenging?**

T: time is always a factor really. We are split across multiple sites, with different days; not all of us drive, so sometimes I am stuck on a bus and if that bus is stuck in the traffic X so what was really helpful is our manager timetable last for half a day of reading and preparing for the materials and doing a bit of the audit and then we had a couple of time where we met up together and then when we are doing the group we naturally come together “oh we can try this family, we can try this activity, this links into that, this links into that” but having that time to actually being not at home where it would be really hard for me to spend time anyway… doing stud like this… at work you end up getting distracted by e-mails (what have youXXX) have a look at it and begin to work through it ‘cause… especially the big audit at the beginning is a bit jobby (?) so it needs to be more time

**Y: Have you shared it with other staff?**

Not yet. I mean other staff… [*all laughs*]

**Y: the two of you and then the parents?**

T: Yeah. And Rachel, our manager

**Y: And Rachel, right**

**H: Is there anything else challenging or relevant before we move on to the next question?**

T: like Janet and Kat said already we are not gonna be able to be the best or reach the highest level of everything because of the nature of the way we do things

J: So for instance, during the audit on the snack table, one of the statements is about parents or adults using loud voices and we have a parent who frequently uses a loud voice and when I spoke to herabout it she did tell me - I did tell “you get quite excited” - she did tell me she has autistic traits and she’s always had this problem of a loud voice; if a child doesn’t know, the child in the setting can get quite alarming or startling when they here a parent screaming, screetching; so there is very little we can do about that in the setting apart from reassuring everybody it is ok.

**H: but also you are understanding her needs and her particular learning difficulty or disability, aren’t you? You are recognising that as well.**

**Y: Can I just ask about the training material as well? You have briefly mentioned there is an audit and all the training material you need to read. Do you feel that you had sufficient time to look through everything to really prepare you for doing the audit?**

T: Yes we have had some time already like I said and we will have some time in the future

K: Yeah, we were set aside three hours each to go through the material individually and then we made time, didn’t we?

T: *nodding*

After we both read through we come sit together and discussed what we wanted to do. With the audit we thought actually “let’s not prep too much. Let’s just go ahead and do it” because the session was new so we wanted to do it kind of raw, “let’s have a base and improve on from that”, so yes we read through it but we did not unpick it too much before

J: And I would say as well, having prior knowledge really set us thin advantage… because if I hadn’t had the prior knowledge there would be certain things I would have to keep stopping to look up, to think what is that, I do not understand that, whereas at least having already gained that knowledge doing the early years degree I knew what they were talking about, so I knew exactly what it was and I could move on, whereas I think it would have been more of a challenge for me if I hadn’t have had that experience during the early years degree, ‘cause I wouldn’t have known a lot, ‘cause a lot of what I know or not, it’s only through doing the degree, it would have been a lot of new knowledge here for me.

**H: And how were you organising yourself with that?**

I got a day off, I got a reading day off, that was great, I got a reading day off, it’s fab!

A: I was saying that about three four weeks ago that we all met and I think there was a different level of anxiety amongst the different setting partners in terms of how much we needed to know so managers were encouraged to give a day or half a day for people to have their reading time depending on their level of the prior knowledge really, on how much they felt they needed. It sounds me like, just the fact they have now done the audit it sounds like all of you are more immerse in it and speaking for Hannah I know I’ll do this consultation with her separately, but I know that now this week having done the audit herself she would say she is less anxious, I think she felt there is a lot of reading to do prior to the timeline, so we thought let’s do the mealtime, snack-time depending on where you are, cause that is something that everybody does everyday to some degree and there was less reading in that one and then you have got the ball rolling .

**H: So, I mean this is about the organisation and structure, you have to some extent already addressed this, but what have you done so far to implement the outputs? So we are talking about intellectual output 5, don’t we? So, anything to add to what you have already said?**

**T:** Oh, we have got this, our dedicated toddler group now, which at the beginning from the outset it was going to be a ToWe related session Monday afternoons. We are not being that specific with the ages, just toddlers, so parents of the young one and the old ones can come along

J: We have kind of said “if they are walking, they can come”

T: Yeah

**H: Which is when they’re todling anyway..**

T: everything related to the project, we all slot into or around that session somehow, so with any family we want to participate we would invite them to what we have done and any family who we willing to start doing the audit with we will meet them through this session and the aspects of the audit they were changing, changing a bit also from after doing the audit we will do this session first and then cascade into all the other sessions if they are working.

K: Even something really little but that had a big impact actually on some of the children today was we swapped some of the chairs. We have got two sizes of children chairs and last week we noticed that they were struggling to get on them because they were the younger ones, so we brought over four of the smaller chairs and a little boy today just scooted on and he was able to sit and with some help cut his apple and he was really confident and kind of… there was no struggle about it. So even though it is a very small change, that’s come about because of the audit, it made a big difference to him today so that was really nice.

**H: Lovely**

A: I Did notice that on your plans so the actions have been identified and already started

Did you already had those chairs

T and K: Yes, they were just on a different building. So we swapped some.

**H: That is fantastic**

H: so what you have done so far?

J: Again, a lot of promoting independence around the snack table, but it is very gradual, step by step and again it is working with the parents. I have done this observation XXX sheet for the practitioners, also to share with parents, just like a little tablet; so we have our toddler group and so for instance what they need to do before snack, during snack, after snack; now we do not expect the children to be able to do all these things, but at least while I am doing the observation or the other practitioner in the room is doing the observation it can be explained to parents: we are just watching and if they are able to do this they get a tick XXX and if they can’t to will just keep watching and maybe in few week, time they would be able to do this. Just things like: did the children respond to washing the hands… What we have for our little toddler group is a a picture mat so can they find their picture? One of the thing we identified in the audit they choose where to sit where we are we putting the picture on the table just to make it easier for them to come to the table and find a place to sit, but again it is things that we will need to keep reviewing as the children become more able and of course if they do want to change sit they can change sit but again using this tick-list is just something else that we can just… it opens up discussion with parents. These are the things that we are looking for so then it makes a little bit clearer for the parents as well where the good areas of being independent are, you know or not to ready to rush in and start chopping or pouring, just give them a chance and help them, promote their independence in doing these things and

A: This can link to the wow-board. Again we have being promoting wow-moments and saying that wow-moments are about your child growing independence, not about the written produce or their little piece of art work. So that kind of thing, we will build on that.

J: And like I said I have done a display board around snack, you know what is the development of my son, so that parents just have an idea at ten months, or nine months or a year their children can be doing particular things for themselves and I have heard one of the parents sit at the table saying “Oh come on you can do this because I have seen it on the board”

*All laughs*

J: Parents are reading the board and again that is why it needs to be in other languages as well. But I was so excited! It is not me saying it, there is evidence that they should be doing these things or at least helped to do these things.

A: It shows the focus on a particular area of the session really makes the difference, doesn’t it? ‘Cause I know that everybody really focused on the snack café XXX but then as you said you leave it so now if you can’t be there the family and the visual aids are doing the work for you. It is really good.

J: And everything is accessible for the children if they want to. The cuts, the plates, the cutlery, paper towels, the bin, everything is there and what we have also done just to make it easier for some children because it is a lot to remember, a cup, a plate, a knife, whatever they want we have set up some little plates that have the cup and the coutlery on it so that if they want they just can take the lot to the table, but some children will choose to take the because they remember, they know what they need, they just like choosing their own.

Differentiation XX in practice isn’t it?

All: yeah

But for some children is too much, they will just give up.

**H: Especially as the children are 18 months. So what are you planning to do or to implement next with the output or with mealtime?**

J: We’ve got lots. There’s lot highlighted from the audit that needs to be, I mean, we are not inclusive with the chairs, we have only got one size chair, our chairs are quite dirty, as much as we try to keep them clean, we have got children who paint on them with paint brushes, they might decide they want to paint them, so there is a lot that needs to be done. I really need to speak to my manager to see where we are going with this.

**H: Absolutely**

K: I think it’s finding the balance between those children who want to carry on working around (???) and painting those chairs, although I know it is not ideal we do promote freedom of choice within the setting and kind of finding that space in the group XXX, ‘cause I know you are probably the same Janet. Space is limited. We only got one room and finding the right space to have snack café is quite tricky. We have automatically put it just near the sink. So that the sink is accessible and it is easy for them to choose what they need and grow with that process, but it will be trial and error for the next few weeks.

**Y: Have you seen your role changing since you have read the material? Language, interaction or how you talk to the parents or the children?**

T: Perhaps yes, it was “we are doing things that we wouldn’t correct?? do”

K: I think for the three of us we have quite recently been in education and learnt about it so it is quite rational mind. But I think it is really useful to have a starting point for parents. That’s what I’ve been using it for anyway. “Oh we are doing this project and thinking about snack-time and this is what we have learned, so we are sharing it with you”; that kind of thing is a good springboard for sharing practice.

J: I totally agree with what Kat said. It is keeping the parents in mind as your partner at the snack table. It is not much “It is me knowing this”, If I do not tell them in an informal way, just always passing on information and noticing the really good, what is working really well

A: It is also important for the managers as well to be involved, to really get the depth behind this and not just think: “Oh, we are just looking at snack café in a different way”, so that if any volunteers are there, if any other support staff are there, we’ve got students, we’ve got some support apprentices in one of the centre at the moment, that everybody really does understand what the main aims are, so the next thing on the overall action plan I am collating is team meetings, they are not really big teams, but everybody is behind this, that the action plan is shared, so everybody really understand what the current focus is. It might be just new signs in different languages or new resources, different chairs or whatever, but the people have the main understanding as well.

**H: So, what have been the general strengths of the work so far?**

A: I think everyone is committed, as long as I have got a sense of it, we started X a month ago so I have got a little bit of uncertainty , but now people have got into it; as I said the managers are thinking behind it; time has been an issue. The strength for me is that everybody is very keen to get on with it.

K: I think we need to. I think there were lots of talking about it, and thinking about it, but until you actually do something it is just paper and then once you get the stuff into it, it makes it much more meaningful.

J: And I think it is recognising the learning - I know we have only concentrated on snack – but just recognising the amount of learning that goes on at snack time: it is just so much for children to have to remember or follow adult instructions; there is so much learning that in some ways you do not really need to worry about the other activities because there is so much you can pick up just by watching the snack.

Particularly supporting home learning, which is the key thing, the all point of the children centre they have the role modelling and then they take that home, so I think it is right to see parents like fellow practitioners and to think that way.

**H: Thank you. What have been the general challenges for you?**

K: Like Tom said time. And then specifically with snack, when we did our action plan we have decided that we would like to buy different kinds of plates, we would like to buy several cutlery and it is just money.

T: And time again: finding the time to go and do that, or order it. Time when we are even together in the same building to work as well.

K: We wanna buy a big table cloth, where are we gonna get that from *(all laughing)* we were really specific with the action plan, something just doesn’t get on.

**Y: Have you taught about these changes in the resources before or is all come about from the project?**

J: The thing we know is if we make these changes we are making it better and better

T: We are asking things that are relatively easy thing that we can do, relatively small changes to our practice that will make a big difference to the life of these kids and their future and that’s what Sure Sure Start was all about.

I can’t remember what the question was

**H: We were looking at the general strength and challenges**

J: Some of the strengths are just having some really good parents [as] role models at the table, really role modelling, how they help their children, how they promote the independence of their children, how they promote the language, but then again you have some poor practice, and this depends who copies what.

K: Yeah, I suppose at the stage we are at the moment one of the challenges is building the relationship with the parents, so get to the points when we can have those conversations and have those conversations sensitively. If it is their first week you just do not want to come in and be like: “Oh, I am glad that you are having a good time, but let’s not do it like that”. You have to wait a couple of weeks, you have to build the relationship first, otherwise we might have changed a little bit of their practices at snack-café, but that would be gone out the door and we’ll never see them again.

A: We also ask people to be thinking about the possible children doing the wellbeing – as we said – you cannot just rush in with that. People have told me that you might have that discussion, families we might work with and start to do that background, because we know that is the key part of this.

**H: Absolutely, it is about the relationships**

**Y: What are the numbers? How many toddlers are you looking at in your settings, so that we can have a general idea?**

J: For the audit?

**Y: no, not for the audit, just that you have at the moment.**

T: As in the group that we are running for this?

**Y: I know that you have different children each day, but what is your kind of range?**

T: For the Monday afternoon session it is about six

K: Seven I think we had today, which is the highest number that we have had since the group started.

**Y: Seven, that is your maximum…**

K: But I would imagine, because again it is a new group, it has only been going four weeks, what the parent said today: “Oh, I didn’t know it was on”, until I rang her and told her about it, as word spreads than more people will come.

T: Our stay and play on Wednesday, which is for all ages, we have between 60 to 70 children coming over the two hours so… That’s in a different place, a very established group, and those are the numbers that we can get.

**Y: It is very varied**

K:There is snack café available in that section!

A: Also implementing the changes, the focus, you felt it was better to start anew with a smaller group, you can see why and eventually share the practice…

T: There are already bits of that cascading into that section

A: The snack café works really well, doesn’t it?

T: the snack café there is very well established and it is working and we’ve got some really good resources that are already existing that we can bring over to our other site to work into the one that we are doing there.

A: And supportive volunteers that you manage as well.

J: Our little explore group, our little target group, there about 20 families invited to that but usually we have 10 families on average each week that would regularly attend. Other people may just come and go, but there is about ten regular families; our snack café as well is really well established and popular, so our children just love it, that is just the activity they want to be at, chopping their bananas and having their drinks; other children they do not want to stop their play to come to the snack table but we did have last week at our little explorers we had a set of tweens and one did come to the snack table and drink, but it hurried away again, so it is quite nice, it is in their own time, it is not forced, they can have a look, they can watch what other people are doing and choose whether or not they want to take part in that, but the children who are enjoying it are really enjoying it.

**H: Fabulous. I think again you have probably covered a lot of what I am going to mention now, but if you feel you have not said anything or if you want to add anything , it is really about tell us about the work of the intellectual output, it is 5 you have worked on, what has been the impact so far. Is there anything else you would like to add to what you have said already?**

J: I just think it just seems such an obvious thing that we all should be doing it.

K: I think that would continue. I completely agree with you and I know that as we look at each output we’ll go:”Oh of course we should have been doing that” but again it is how far in depth you can go with one area, it is exciting and I am excited about it but at the same time “Oh my god we have so much work to do!”, ‘because we strive constantly for good practice, for excellent practice, that is what we want to offer to all of our families

T: and we know there are going to be challenges in the future. That we are changing the locations for one of our sites, so there will be a new timetable coming into effect again, but throughout that we will have the ToWe ethos embedded.

K: Yeah

**H: Oh, lovely**

A: We should probably have said that, in terms of challenges, the fact that the centres timetables changes each time, you know it is not like it stands alone naturally.

T: Yeah but our core groups will be the same. That is why we started doing this one in the past couple of weeks, because we have only been doing this since Easter.

A: And the same with invitation only group, certain families are invited and that really works well. Some centre are struggling with getting those invitation only groups of the ground, but it is about showing impact for those key families.

J: I was gonna say something like to us it is all really obvious what the benefits are, which is why we are working with parents and that sharing the information with the parents it is so important now at this stage.

Definitely *(nodding, all agree)*

A: And then we were all happy. When we met we all said “Oh let’s start with mealtime” we had general consensus, but I know that looking at the ToWe audit itself people think I should have focused on the learning environment but are you happy with going in with this one and then seeing how the other one can happen?

T: Definitely *(nodding, all agree)*

**H: Are you starting to think through what the other intellectual output…**

A: I think observation, observing what children voices and expressions are would be vital and it really supports the focus on transition for the summer term as well we want to get children’s voices on their learning journeys and around the children centres generally, so having again some built in time to do observation on some identified children, thinking about to what we did with those video samples we saw I think that would be really powerful, but obviously guided by how you feel it is going but I think that would be the next step really from this.

*Nodding*

**Y: Do you see yourself flowing from one intellectual output to another or do you revisit one if you feel you need to do more…**

J: I think we would have to revisit

T: We have got fantastic resources in the folder there, so we would be revisiting X

K: I think if we do specifically children voice and observation next, then what we observe undoubtedly would feedback and make us think about something else

J: It is always gonna be ever changing anyway, even if you do get it right in a few months time you will need to go back because things may have slipped XXX or you might have new children, parents, practitioners

*(all agree)*

**H: Ok, so which strategies, ideas, actions you are really proud of?**

**Y: It would just be nice to have an example from each of you about the impact on a child or a toddler that you have noticed. You talked a lot about the parents and their involvement in developing partnership. What have you noted within the children?**

J: I can give you an example. There are 2 little tweens and they used to be back and forth, back and forth to the snack table, take a bite and go back and play and then coming back and wanting another plate, another cup, and take a bite, and off they go, and then come back, and they were going through like they would be doing this like ten times and it was very hard working with mum because at one time I said “That’s it. Finished?” and then mum said “I am gonna cry. I have snack in my bag, I could give that to him, but you wouldn’t like that”, I said “But J he is not hungry, it is just coming back, taking a bite and then go”. I did have to explain her that he wasn’t hungry. I think the little place cards helped with the little faces because these two boys we really worked on when one snack is finished and just used a Makaton sign for finished then everything goes in the bin, so we will help them with their cutlery and plates in the bin and take the little face mat off the table. It was slow, it was a slow build-up, but now they’ll come, they’ll sit, they’ll have their snack, they’ll have a piece of everything, it is not just a quick bite and off they go; they are actually really enjoying and eating quite a substantial snack and then when they are satisfied and they have had enough they’ll be leaving. So, for us as practitioners who know, we know this is like amazing X, but everyone else coming and observing that you know it wouldn’t be so significant but for us as practitioners, we know and even their mum knows that, wow we have really…

**Y: Does one follow the other**

J: No, they’ll come in their own times. They are very independent, individuals.

*(All laugh)*

**H: And is mum on board now?**

J: She is more on board. She is the mum who said “I read that off the wall”, “you can’t do it cause I’ve seen it on the wall”. Again, it is that relationship with the mother. You know that for her you know you’re crossing boundaries, but it is just how long do we let this happen before we have to step in and say “That’s enough now”.

A: And also if you think about her day with them, does she always give when they say they want something or she actually recognises that it is snack time now, so that you can take that message and bring it into the home life.

K: I always think for the children it is lovely that they are allowed to use cutlery. In the sections we have a lot of parents who do not like their children using knives and they have never let their child use a knife before and they come in and supervise. We have the Pampered Chef knives, the childrens one, so we often model trying to cut our own; it obviously won’t cut you. That reassure them a little bit and then just the children face when they realise they can hold their bit of fruit and slice it themselves, it is really lovely.

That is definitely a really enjoyable activity for them, to go to the table and chop, chop, chop lots of fruit. They may not necessarily eat it!

*(all laugh, people talking at the same time)*

J: I would say that for us too, we have the open cups, they have been the biggest thing. All the cups can be used as an open cup and they’ve got a hand so the children can hold them, but they do have an option of having the little tippee lead if they want and some of the cups are easy tippers, so they are really easy for the little children if they have never used the tippee cup before, because we have had examples of children who are four coming in with a bottle, an actual bottle of juice and so they sit at their snack table with their bottle of juice. So you know just seeing that little children are using an open cup, you can introduce an open cup, you might get a little spillage but that’s all part of it.

A: And it is reassuring for parents to see it too, [to see that] you do not mind mess, it is part of learning and they keep coming back, they are going to see their child develop and they got that security that everybody around them does not mind.

J: And it is giving them tips. You do not have to fill the cup, just put a little bit in and then if they do spill it that’s okay, but they need that practice to find where their little tipping point is.

A: There is just lot of learning and like you say people just might XXX and glance at the activity “that’s just snack” and it is actually knowing the level of learning ~XXX

J: And for us knowing that that child won’t come to us for bottle…and now they’re drinking from a cup

*(all nodding and talking at the same time)*

**H: So it sounds like you have done a lot of actions and you have a lot of strategies already**

**H: So I think, if there isn’t anything else you would like to add for the intellectual output and the impact, are you happy for us to move on to your final thoughts?**

*All nodding*

**H: So is there anything else you would like to add or share? Is there anything else about the project and what you have done so far?**

T: I’ve done things differently at home with my two year old *(All laughing)*. He is two and a bit and he has a little stall now and he helps us in the kitchen doing chopping and washing and putting margarine on bread and stuff and when we are going to the kitchen he will come and go “yan - help”. I know they do not insist on climbing up on the stall and everything, he goes up, whatever…

**Y: Very independent**

T: I took a nice photo yesterday of him with a pop margarine tub and a plastic knife trying to spread margarine all over his bread for breakfast. It made a different for my own!

**H: Oh fabulous!**

A: It is a great thing to share with parents!

*All agree*

T: Yes exactly, yes!

A: But it is important, just doing parenting courses for parents, you know, you have been there, you know what it is like, not everything works straight away, you have to keep giving things a go.

**Y: Are parents asking a lot of questions during mealtime about what should I have been doing for this or when should I start giving him this type or snack or food…**

T: A lot of the questions we are getting are around this cutlery and there are some families who are after having a chat with them they have like 16-17 months old and she is still eating with their hands and we are like “maybe try to introduce fork, or spoon” and then “we can try to come to our snack café where you can have a go with it” and then there is the general sort of questions about my child eat eggs is that good or my child does not eat eggs is that good; for that sort of thing we have to send them towards a health professional.

K: We get some of those questions, we have quite a lot of questions actually abut much earlier on,l so at the weening stage a lot of people are asking a lot of questions.

**H: So is there anything else you would like to add or share?**

K: I think it just makes me really focus, which is nice; cause you can just go through the day and you got into a routine and things are established but this actually makes me think specifically what can we improve here, what is working well and that is really nice. Just a bit of a shake, which is really good.

Apart from everything else that we have mentioned, we do not have two sizes of chairs, we do not have two sizes of cutlery, so all those things we need… but also the general cleanliness of the area I do not think it is that good, whereas I am observant but I do not think other people are, so the little place mat at the end of the session I wash them but I know if I do not wash them they do not wash them, because they do not see. I am finding that a challenge, that it needs to be clean and especially with fruit juice from the fruit it can go really smelly and sticky, that is a bit of a challenge, just the cleanliness of it and keeping the chairs clean as well because children will come over and they’ll paint, they have paint on their hands.

A: So implications for your team maybe everybody having that discussion “this might seems a little thing, but this is a key focus at the moment, we need to show consistency” and to have something like that minuted or have policies around. It might be something else, an action plan, but you actually change your practice if you have a policy written or something added to an existing policy.

J: One of our volunteer she did come up with an idea cause we have little laminated place mats and they are not the greatest so she did say “Oh, if you know someone who is good at needle work you can have a little cotton one and they can just go into the washing machine” and I thought “Oh,. That would be so good”.

*(all laughing talking at the same time)*

**H: A., is there anything you would like to share?**

A; Just how can we relaunch the ‘Henry Health’ eating resources. It is great that we focus on independence at the snack café, but trying to relaunch the healthy eating message. There are lots of free resources we could have, get the centres to support that. We have it commissioned for all centres but now it has ended, so what’s the way to keep the focus on that as well, you know things like “four different ways to serve an avocado”, something around portion sizes. Cause we know that a lot of families ask for support around the weening stage, but after that it is so easy to get them into bad habits like constantly grazing, give them to much, this keep them on the way when they are going to their pre-school setting after here, so that kind of implications for resources.

A: Anything else to add or share, as I was saying at the beginning before we start taping, I was really pleased to see that the interest in AFC is wider, the partnership board are very keen to hear about the project and its impact on the early days, but they feel confident that whatever happens in the future we have got this strong sense of leading this project. I feel that we justified making that choice and general impression, yes as with everybody once you start doing it it comes to life, doesn’t it?

**H: anyone else about any general impression of the project? What’s happened so far?**

Just that it is such a positive project to be part of and I do believe it is well needed and I think it would benefit many other nurseries *(all nod)*. There is a lot of food for thought and it does bring a lot of research back into the forefront.

A big part of my role is going out to the nurseries and build those relationships with them, so being able to bring this research and to share that with them would be really useful. They are coming into the centre for different meetings, so it will be a focus of the meetings in the future definitely, which is nice.

Also we have got the people in the early years team that leads the training for two years old, there is a program already started with them and again, how we are making sure that we are joining up and sharing best practice is a key focus as well, because they work primarily with the setting that have two years old children, but making sure that where those children are it is really up to speed. The centre is dealing with children that are disadvantaged, most of them, making sure that in those settings were founded children are that they are really up to speed with this it is a really key focus, it would be a big part of our development plan as an early years theme.

**H: thank you. Could you summarise the setting experience in three adjectives?**

T: Exciting, reassuring, beneficial

Taught provoking, fun, interesting

There is a lovely energy, it is like really holding in on that area energy

Challenging, because of driving everybody together and make sure that we share; rewarding, it is good to see the print of the page coming to life; and exciting.

Energising. Did anybody say that word?

**H: Lovely. Is there anything else you want to say before we turn off?**

No

**H: I’d just like to say thank you so much for coming. I am gonna press stop now.**

**Transcript checked and gaps filled in 11 & 12th September (YM)**