

Healthy Movers London



Interim Report — Year 3 Update

July 2026

*Covering the third year of delivery (academic year 2025/26),
building on and extending the Interim Report of September 2025*

Prepared by CREC for Youth Sport Trust

Evaluation of the Mercers' Company-funded Healthy Movers London project (2023–2027)

Executive Summary

Healthy Movers London continues to go from strength to strength in its third year of delivery. This report builds on the September 2025 interim findings with a substantially richer evidence base, drawing on: practitioner networking sessions and setting interviews; three rounds of Healthy Movers Ambassador reflective discussions; direct parent voice from Tower Hamlets interviews and response forms; 132 End of Training Survey responses; and updated programme monitoring data across 52 reporting settings.

HM Champions reported outcomes remain positive with 94% of settings reporting improved physical skills and an increase physical activity taking place in the classrooms. 91% reported improved enjoyment, 88% improved confidence and happiness, and 80% improved school readiness, up from 73% the previous year. Training quality is a particular highlight, with the End of Training Survey (132 responses) showing that 98.8% of respondents felt expectations were met or exceeded, and 95–97% reporting that the training helped their competence, confidence and motivation 'a lot.'

Evidence for the Nursery-to-Reception transition is now well established and consistently positive, with practitioners describing the process as '*very fluid*' thanks to shared routines and spaces. Reception-to-Year 1 transition, while still developing, is now exemplified, including a dedicated Key Stage 1 trial launch and a promising cross-borough model being mapped by one ambassador for roll-out from September 2026. Evidence on inequalities is developing and illustrated by direct family testimony, including families adapting Healthy Movers activities for flats, car parks and bilingual homes with real enthusiasm and creativity. The settings-plus-home model has also taken a significant step forward this year; the first substantial parent-voice dataset collected shows uniformly positive engagement, with families describing Healthy Movers as '*a great way to bond*.'

Taken together, the 2025/26 evidence base confirms that Healthy Movers is not only reaching more children and families than ever before but is doing so with growing depth across wider networks.

Acronyms used in this report

Acronym	Meaning
CL	Communication and language (prime area of learning)
CREC	Centre for Research in Early Childhood
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
DfE	Department for Education
EAL	English as an Additional Language
EDC	Ethnically Diverse Communities
EY	Early Years
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage
EYPP	Early Years Pupil Premium
HM	Healthy Movers
IDACI	Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index
IMD	Index of Multiple Deprivation
KS1	Key Stage 1
LA	Local Authority
PD	Physical Development (prime area of learning)
PSED	Personal, Social and Emotional Development (prime area of learning)
PVI	Private, voluntary and/or independent (nurseries)
RQ	Research Question
SEND	Special educational needs and disabilities
SES	Socio-Economic Status
SLCN	Speech, Language and Communication Needs
EHCP	Education Health Care Plan

Healthy Movers aims and project scope

Youth Sport Trust's Healthy Movers (HM) programme aims to develop children's physical literacy, support their social and emotional development and wellbeing, helping them gain a better start in life. The programme is designed to support two- to five-year-olds, delivered through resources and training for practitioners in Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), and empowers families to promote physical activity.

Youth Sport Trust has received funding from the Mercers' Company as trustee of the Charity of Sir Richard Whittington to deliver a four-year project (2023–2027) entitled Healthy Movers London. Rolling out across 60 early years settings in four London boroughs with the aim of reaching 1,200 children aged 2–5 years old and their families, Healthy Movers aims to use physical literacy to improve Early Years Foundation Stage outcomes and school readiness, in particular targeting areas of high disadvantage where there are low levels of physical activity, and where child outcomes at 5 (EYFSP) may lag below the average. HM aims to upskill and resource early years practitioners to deliver the programme and engage children and families.

The programme is delivered in each borough with the support of a dedicated Healthy Movers Ambassador, whose role is to build relationships with settings, provide light-touch visits and demonstration sessions, and act as the ongoing local point of contact between Youth Sport Trust, CREC and participating settings. The role and effectiveness of the Ambassador layer itself is discussed in detail under RQ4 below. The four selected London boroughs are: Camden; Islington; Southwark; and Tower Hamlets.

This report is the second annual interim update (following the first interim report of September 2025) and covers progress during the third year of delivery of the project, academic year 2025/26, up to July 2026.

Project interim report prepared by CREC

The Centre for Research in Early Childhood (CREC) is a nationally and internationally recognised early years research and development organisation, which specialises in qualitative and quantitative research that aims to gather multi-perspectives on early childhood, with the aim of informing evidence-based policy and practice. All CREC's evaluations are conducted to the highest ethical standards 'with' its clients and never 'done to' them; knowledge is co-created through regular dialogue contextualised to the specific situation that services are delivered in.

CREC has been commissioned by Youth Sport Trust to evaluate the impact of this project, specifically through responding to the following research questions:

1. How has Healthy Movers supported children at key transition points, notably moving from Nursery to Reception and Reception to Year 1?
2. What could have happened without Healthy Movers?
3. How does Healthy Movers support children facing inequalities at these key transition points?
4. How has the Healthy Movers model, whereby delivery takes place in settings and is supported at home, supported the effectiveness of the programme?

The September 2025 Interim Report presented the first round of evidence against these questions. This update draws together everything gathered since, so that it can be read alongside the September 2025 report ahead of the final project report due in September 2027.

Project methodology summary

The project methodology, as set out in September 2025, comprises the following strands. Each is updated below with what has been completed or added since.

Youth Sport Trust reporting data

The online programme reporting survey and end-of-training survey have continued as planned. 32 completed returns were analysed from settings this year, a broadly comparable base to the 33 settings that reported at interim stage last year. Cohort Two settings began reporting from May 2026 as planned, but volumes from this group remain modest and are not yet separately reportable. The End of Training Survey has received 132 responses (see Data progress and summary).

Practitioner (Healthy Movers Champions) Networking Sessions and Setting Interview Notes

Practitioner Networking Sessions were again held at the key transition point (summer term), generating transcripts comparable to last year's focus groups; 25 HM Champions attended four networking sessions. This year these have been supplemented by a further round of setting interview notes gathered throughout the year and during summer term setting visits.

Parent interviews

The telephone interview method, set out in the original methodology and deferred in 2024/25 due to timing in the academic cycle, has been replaced this year with a set of 10 face-to-face parent interviews conducted across two Tower Hamlets settings (a primary school and a two-year-old nursery provision) in June 2026. This has been supplemented by a bank of written parent and child response forms collected independently by a primary school following its backpack loan to Reception families. These methods have been facilitated through Healthy Movers Ambassador links.

HM Ambassadors reflective dialogue and logs

Three reflective discussions were held with Ambassadors this year (March, April and June 2026), with the June session the most developed of the three, by which point all Ambassadors had been embedded in HM practice for a full term. This update also draws upon Ambassador written reflections that seek to capture the iterative developments within their boroughs.

Stay and Play visits

Structured researcher visits to Stay and Play sessions were not scheduled in 2025/26, despite efforts, and remain planned for the coming year.

Analysis strategy

This cycle produced significant qualitative data sets, including extended transcripts from Champion Networking Sessions and Ambassador reflective discussions. Larger data sets were first consolidated and reduced thematically (based on the research questions) before being compared across data methods (educators / parents / ambassadors) for this report.

Data progress and summary

Programme reporting this year draws on 32 completed returns from Cohort One settings. A further 3 surveys were started but not usable for this update (1 setting not yet delivering, 2 partially completed); these are excluded from the figures below but are noted here for transparency.

Reach

Measure	Reported (settings answering)	Inferred across all settings
Young people participating	1,400 (n = 32 settings)	2,160 (n = 52 settings)
Adults trained	130 (n = 32 settings)	213 (n = 52 settings); 216 if the 3 Ambassadors are included
Families engaged	489 (n = 32 settings)	800 (n = 52 settings)

This is a substantial increase on the September 2025 figures (1,094 children, 392 families, 77 adults trained from 33 settings), consistent with the programme's continued roll-out toward its target of 1,200 children and 60 settings.

Who is being reached

Based on the 32 settings that reported demographic detail:

Measure	Figure
Girls / Boys (children)	46.6% / 53.4%
Pre-school age / Reception age	73.6% / 26.4%
Asian or Asian British	41.3%
White (English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British)	18.5%
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	12.1%
Black, Black British, Caribbean or African	12.0%
Other White background	8.4%
Other ethnic group	7.8%
Children with SEND	17.6%
Children eligible for 2-year-old Funding / Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP)	28.6%

The 28.6% figure eligible for 2-year-old Funding/EYPP gives a useful quantitative anchor for the 'disadvantage' discussion under RQ3 below.

National comparators for SEND prevalence and EYPP eligibility in the 2–5 age do not collectively exist however these statistics can be better understood knowing that approx. 8.9% 3-4-year-olds receive SEN support or have an EHCP and 15.1% are entitled to EYPP¹.

Of the 130 adults trained this year, 92% were recorded as female. On ethnicity and disability, 55.4% of adults trained recorded as being from ethnically diverse communities (EDC), and 1.5% recorded as having a disability.

Perceived impact

Champions (n = 32 settings) were asked whether HM had impacted a range of areas '*a lot better*', '*a bit better*', '*no change*' or '*worse*' (no '*worse*' responses were recorded on any measure). The table below shows the proportion reporting any positive change, ranked highest to lowest:

Area	% reporting positive change
Amount of physical activity	93.8%
Physical skills (balance, locomotion, object control)	93.8%
Enjoyment of sport and physical activity	90.6%
Confidence to take part in sport and physical activity	87.5%
Happiness	87.5%
Resilience	87.1%
School readiness	80.0% (up from 73% last year)
Behaviour at school / setting	77.4%
Belonging to school / setting	76.7%
Communication and language	75.0%
Connectedness to others	71.9%
Engagement with school / setting	69.0%

¹ <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/funded-early-education-and-childcare/2025>

Child-level improvement was also reported against the EYFS prime and specific areas (n = 32 settings, scaled to 52 settings in the final column):

EYFS area	Children improved (reported)	% of reported cohort	Inferred (52 settings)
Physical development	865	61.8%	1,406
Personal, social and emotional development	668	47.7%	1,086
Communication and language	592	42.3%	962
Literacy	454	32.4%	738
Mathematics	449	32.1%	730

Two further measures, tabulated below, are comparatively weaker and are picked up again under RQ4:

Statement	Strongly agree / Agree	Neither agree nor disagree
HM positively impacted senior leadership's / staff's wider perception of PE and physical activity	61.3%	38.7%
HM improved partnership working / collaboration with other schools or settings	32.3%	67.7%

Champions' own views of the programme

The following measure reflects champions' stated views of HM rather than a reported outcome for children:

Likelihood of recommending HM to other settings (0–10 scale)	% of champions
8 or above	77.4%
10 (maximum score)	51.6%

End of Training Survey (132 responses)

Responses came from Camden (52), Southwark (49), Tower Hamlets (19) and Islington (12).

Measure	Result
Expectations 'Exceeded' or 'Met'	82 of 83 respondents who answered this question (98.8%)
Felt training helped competence 'a lot'	97.0%
Felt training helped confidence 'a lot'	95.5%
Felt training helped motivation 'a lot'	96.2%
Tutor rated 'Very good'	97.7%
Content rated 'Very good'	89.4%
Resources rated 'Very good'	88.6%
Rated likelihood to recommend at 8 or above (out of 10)	130 of 132 (98.5%)

Free-text comments reinforce the ambassador discussions' emphasis on tutor energy and practical, ready-to-use content. One respondent said the training gave them ideas for how to implement HM as 'part of what we already do', rather than an additional task requiring extra time. A small number of responses show scale ratings inconsistent with their accompanying free-text comments (e.g. a low numeric score paired with clearly positive comments); these are most likely scale-selection errors rather than genuine dissatisfaction, and are not material to the overall pattern, but should be treated with caution if quoted as standalone statistics.

Progress against the research questions

The sections below integrate the new evidence with the September 2025 findings, organised by research question. Overall, RQ3 and RQ4 are now the most richly and consistently evidenced across sources; RQ1 has moved from almost no direct evidence to a small number of concrete examples; RQ2 remains the weakest-evidenced question, as no source asks the counterfactual question directly.

1. How has Healthy Movers supported children at key transition points, notably moving from Nursery to Reception and Reception to Year 1?

Nursery to Reception

This remains the transition point with the richest evidence base. Shared outdoor space and consistent routines mean nursery and reception children are often already familiar with HM activities before they move up a year group, as one practitioner described how, as soon as the equipment came out, *'they're all around you, nursery and reception'*, calling the process *'very fluid'*. Daily HM routines were also credited with easing unrelated transition moments, for example, a fire drill at one setting went smoothly because children were already used to lining up the same way for HM, describing this key transitional skill as *'just more of a routine for them now'*.

One nursery had built a specific transition structure into its practice, with children joining a weekly HM and circle time session in the room they were moving to *'to get them familiar with that staff team, that environment'* before moving across, a process they described as having *'really, really helped'*.

Beyond settled routine, practitioners also linked HM directly to the specific skills children need to transition successfully such as the ability to follow multi-step instructions, applied when children first learn a new classroom's routines. Reference was also made by practitioners to children more frequently displaying the gross motor control needed to get changed independently for PE once in Reception; and, moving into Year 1, the core strength and sitting stamina they would eventually need for longer, more formal periods of table-based learning. One practitioner reflected that assessment data had shown *'expected'* gross motor outcomes across her cohort, which she directly attributed to consistent HM delivery once she *'made the link'* (between HM and impact on learning domains beyond physical development) illustrating how these general physical gains translate into transition-readiness skills rather than remaining abstract.

Free-text responses by HM Champions to the programme monitoring survey corroborate this at scale. Several Champions specifically linked HM's consistent use across groups and classes as a mechanism for easing transition; as one champion explained, *'Healthy Movers [is] a consistent approach in our setting so this familiarity supports transition'*. Many champions referred to underlying school-readiness skills being evidenced through the programme, helping children transition through *'balancing, following instructions, physical and social development, literacy and understanding'*.

Reception to Year 1

This side of transition was flagged in September 2025 as under-evidenced, and the Networking Sessions/Setting Interview data confirms it remains the least developed aspect overall. However, two new pieces of evidence now exist:

- One school in the Networking Sessions data has explicitly extended HM into Key Stage 1 through *'brain breaks'*, has trained KS1 staff in the approach, and has set up an after-school HM club for Key Stage 1 children.

- A Primary School's Key Stage 1 Trial Launch (12 May 2026, Tower Hamlets) documents targeted afternoon movement breaks using cards such as '*Wiggle, Weave, Watch*', delivered three times a week, fusing classroom movement goals with playground integration led by a dedicated coach.

School readiness

Educators continue to link HM to broader school readiness, citing improvements in core strength and stability needed for sitting and handwriting, self-regulation, turn-taking, and communication. This picture is corroborated by this year's quantitative data, in which 80% of programme reporting respondents rated school readiness as 'a lot' or 'a bit' better, up from 73% at the same point last year, and by open-text survey comments such as one describing HM as helping children '*build key physical, social, and emotional skills — such as coordination, communication, confidence, and the ability to interact with others*' ahead of new routines and environments. Ambassadors have further added a layer to this aspect as plans have developed to link HM trained early years settings to receiving primary schools also using HM (via contacts through the London Marathon schools programme) so that induction days could use a shared HM activity as a welcoming, familiar bridge. Home-level evidence adds further support with several parent response forms from Reception families describing children successfully practising exactly these school-readiness skills at home e.g. balancing, following instructions and turn-taking. Another parent described how the whole family 'enjoyed taking turns' with the bean bag activity.

2. What could have happened without Healthy Movers?

As in September 2025, this remains the weakest-evidenced research question. No source this year asks the counterfactual question directly, and almost all reflections describe positive change since starting HM rather than a considered comparison with a genuine 'no HM' scenario. For example, no source addresses whether the amount or quality of physical activity provision would have been materially different, or whether settings would simply have delivered similar activity under a different name. This distinction is worth building into future data-gathering tools.

That said, this year's ambassador's reflections provides the closest thing to real counterfactual evidence anywhere in the evaluation to date: cases where the absence of an effective ambassador or in-setting champion is directly associated with a setting failing to implement HM at all.

- One setting fully disengaged from the programme after '*long stretches of unreturned communication and a total lack of interest*' and was formally recommended for drop-out status in March 2026.
- In one setting, once the trained champion left the setting, remaining staff were '*completely unaware of the programme's objectives*', resulting in '*zero implementation*' and the need to retrain an entirely new staff cohort.

Taken together, these examples suggest that without the ambassador/champion layer, settings are considerably more likely to disengage or fail to implement HM at all — the strongest, if still indirect, evidence available anywhere for what 'no Healthy Movers' looks like in practice.

The Networking Sessions data adds several further inferential accounts: reduced physical competence and more injuries (one setting described a previously '*very, very clumsy*' child who '*would just stand up and fall over*', now with '*a lot less accidents... a lot more coordination*'); reduced staff engagement absent a structured programme (some staff '*would kind of hide away*' until rotating leadership of sessions changed this); and reduced exclusion of withdrawn, pre-verbal or non-English-speaking children, one of whom, a practitioner reflected, '*feels part of that group... without having that disadvantage of not having to be able to communicate*', implying such inclusion might not occur as naturally without a structured, low-barrier activity like HM.

3. How does Healthy Movers support children facing inequalities at these key transition points?

This was again one of the more actively discussed themes this year, although no setting was using HM deliberately in this way e.g. as a targeted approach or linked in to Pupil Premium funding. Support for disadvantaged children continues to be largely organic and practitioner-led rather than systematic; a point made in the June ambassador discussion, describing this mostly as a *'universal offer'* rather than deliberately targeted work with disadvantaged groups specifically.

Within this year's cohort, 17.6% of children reported have SEND and 28.6% are eligible for 2-year-old Funding or EYPP, giving useful scale to the qualitative examples below.

It is important to read this alongside the wider context: all four project boroughs (Camden, Islington, Southwark and Tower Hamlets) contain areas of significant deprivation on national indices, and the programme's own criteria specifically target areas of high disadvantage and low physical activity. A universal offer delivered within these boroughs may therefore still be reaching a disproportionately disadvantaged population even without setting-level targeting.

Housing and space disadvantage

A Family Hub educator in the networking sessions described how *'a lot of our families have housing issues, overcrowding, no gardens'* and how activities were run *'to show how these things can be done indoors in a small space,'* a theme echoed by several other settings for children without garden or balcony access. The June ambassador discussion sharpened this picture with a stark local example of inequality unrelated to income: *'very, very swish apartment blocks'* immediately next to disadvantaged housing, where even affluent families in flats have *'no access really to outside space'*, challenging assumptions that disadvantage maps neatly onto economic status. The low-cost, equipment-free framing of the home resources, using *'everyday resources'* rather than particular purchased equipment, continues to be repeatedly cited as key to reducing financial barriers, and was reaffirmed in June as a key *'accessibility feature... to support that home learning and perhaps level some of that disadvantage.'*

This is corroborated by HM Champion free-text responses such as *'more physical movement as they don't have garden at home'*, and *'children who don't go to the park or experience physical activities at home are given the opportunity to do so. Children who live in overcrowded accommodation are able to use their gross motor skill.'*

The Tower Hamlets parent interviews provide a family voice on this issue. One mother took HM activities into the local park and one father interviewed described using the car park outside their block of flats to run activities.

SEND and sensory needs

There is evidence across the data sources of HM supporting children experiencing SEND. One practitioner in the networking sessions planned to use HM specifically for its sensory value for *'heavy sensory explorers,'* and a Family Hub was planning sessions with a SEND families group. In the June Ambassador session it was reported that children with SEND were *'much more engaged'* with HM specifically because of its low-pressure, non-competitive format, *'there's no pressure... let's all have fun together.'* The Ambassador reflections add further detail, one chain nursery adapted its delivery for autistic pupils through a structured 1:4 staff-to-pupil ratio and adjusted card layouts (for activities such as 'Fruit Salad' and 'Pop the Bubbles'). One Ambassador reflected that activities require no prior

'working knowledge of a particular sport or skill,' do not depend on lengthy explanation or modelling, can be repeated at a child's own pace, and are 'not competitive so those that struggle with losing do not have that to deal with.'

In the Tower Hamlets parent interviews, one mother reported that the backpack was equally motivating for her Reception-age child and for her older daughter (Year 4), who has an autism diagnosis; she felt the backpack was effective for both the physical development and the social side of development it encouraged through talk in the home.

English as an additional language and pre-verbal children

HM's physical, gesture-based format continues to be seen as a route to inclusion for children with limited or no English. In the networking sessions an educator described observing a Russian-speaking child moving from watching on the side-lines to briefly joining in, describing it as clear *'progress'*; one practitioner reflected more broadly that a child with no English *'feels part of that group... without having that disadvantage of not having to be able to communicate.'* Ambassadors reflections did note that the text-heavy activity cards were inaccessible for some and reported on one setting that had to *'manually design and source separate visual supporting images'* for cards such as *'5 a day'* to make the curriculum accessible.

The Tower Hamlets parent interviews add direct evidence here too. One bilingual family showed how HM could be delivered in Spanish with the child responding in English, without it feeling like homework. The mother in this family, herself an early years movement and music specialist, felt the backpack *'gave great ideas for families to keep moving at home.'* A second family with limited English still shared clear, positive feedback about their child's favourite activity (the bean bag game, played *'again and again'*), showing engagement was not dependent on parental fluency.

Speech, language and communication needs

There is evidence that HM supports children with SLC needs. Specifically, one setting reported evidence from their own screening checks that language had improved alongside physical gains, attributing part of this to storytelling-style HM delivery; this is consistent with this year's programme reporting data, in which 75% of respondents rated a positive communication and language impact. It is also exemplified by a nursery family whose relatively quiet daughter took charge of leading HM activities with her two older brothers (aged around 11) at home, and was reported to have *'enhanced her language and communication'* through this instructional role she took on, with the brothers going on to independently use the activity cards themselves.

Access equity within settings, and ambiguity over the term 'disadvantaged'

One setting in the networking sessions deliberately scheduled HM sessions at different times of day so that children attending only part-time hours (e.g. 15–30 hours) were not excluded, so that *'no one is missing out.'* As last year, several educators asked for clarification on what *'disadvantaged'* meant in this context, and at least one practitioner stated plainly that in her view the setting did not have any children they would consider disadvantaged, a reminder that the programme's relevance to inequality specifically continues to vary by setting demographic as well as educators perceptions of such inequalities.

4. How has the Healthy Movers model, whereby delivery takes place in settings and is supported at home, supported the effectiveness of the programme?

The dual delivery model continues to be widely seen as central to HM's impact, though execution and uptake still vary considerably between settings. This year's evidence is substantially developed by direct parent-facing data (the Tower Hamlets parent interviews and the primary school's parent response forms), which was not available at last year's interim stage.

Embedding in routine, and the home resource bags

Settings doing HM daily continued to report it becoming *'our routine now'*, with visible before/after differences in lining up, turn-taking and listening. This is corroborated by the 93.8% of Champions reporting improved physical skills and the 87.5% reporting improved confidence to take part in physical activity. Feedback on the home resource bags remains mixed: some settings reported enthusiastic parental engagement, with videos and photos of home use sent in, while others reported minimal take-up, one described only *'3 parents'* engaging with home activities across a term despite enthusiastic sign-up at a launch event. Reported barriers included practical logistics (losing bag contents, difficulty replacing items, distributing fairly, which some settings addressed through a rotation system) and parent perception, with some parents feeling their children were *'already very active'* through other clubs. One experienced educator raised the point that home resources should be introduced earlier in the year rather than at the end, since families *'only find out, really, about the 180 minutes... at the end of the year, and it should be at the beginning of the year.'*

The parent and family perspective

The Tower Hamlets parent interviews (10 parents across a primary school and a two-year-old nursery) and a separate set of 10 parent/child response forms provide the first substantial direct family-voice evidence in the evaluation, and it is consistently and strongly positive across both sources.

- **Enthusiasm and enjoyment.** No family described engagement as forced or reluctant. Children were consistently described as *'excited'* and *'really enjoyed'* the activities; one parent response form described a child as *'v. excited to bring HM bag home'* and *'really excited to do this activity'*, while another child's favourite part was *'jumping from one planet to another'*.
- **Not perceived as homework.** Several parents explicitly noted the backpack felt like play rather than a chore, one parent's initial reaction was that it *'was not seen as a chore or homework'* and a bilingual family whose child *'did not find it like homework'* despite associating it with school.
- **Whole-family bonding and involvement.** This theme runs through both sources: *'great way to bond and get some exercise together'*; a dad who *'helped to measure and place stepping stones'* and *'took part'* in crossing the river; a family who *'added extra steps to make it more challenging (balancing on our heads)'*; and a parent who reflected it *'was a fun way for the whole family to be active together'*.
- **Sibling and family inclusion.** Older siblings joined in spontaneously or were actively recruited, *'he made his sister join in too'* and a child with an autism diagnosis was positively engaged, and twins each received their own backpack rather than sharing one.
- **Adult participation and modelling.** Several parents joined in directly, with one noting her child *'needed to copy her'*, and two parents agreeing that activities needed to be demonstrated to be effective; one parent reflected that Healthy Movers *'made her realise how unfit she was'*.
- **Adapting to limited home space.** Families in flats without gardens took activities to a local park or used a car park; response forms confirm activities were also readily adapted indoors; one family did

'all of it indoors', building a river from kitchen towel and pillows to practise jumping and side-stepping.

- **Communication, language and social development.** Benefits were reported beyond physical activity, including one child's language and communication gains from taking on an instructional role with older siblings, and general reports that activities encouraged children to *'talk a lot more at home'*.
- **Ownership and responsibility.** One parent noted her child felt responsible for looking after the bag's contents so it was ready for a friend to use next; seen as a positive outcome in its own right.
- **Habit formation for younger children.** At the two-year-old nursery, one mother described how a previously difficult tooth-brushing routine at home became something her child *'now loves doing'* once it was incorporated into the nursery's Healthy Movers routine, despite the same modelling having been tried at home already.

Scarves, bean bags, bubbles and flash cards were the most consistently praised resources across both sources; kitchen roll (used as floor markers) worked less well for some families, with small square foam mats suggested as an alternative. A demonstration session held in school before the backpacks went home was specifically credited by parents with giving them the confidence to use the resources at home, and one parent thanked Youth Sport Trust and Healthy Movers directly for *'making the backpacks available to take home'*.

Ambassador and training support

Light-touch external support again appears to reinforce the model's effectiveness in-setting; one school described how a short informal conversation and demonstration session from a HM Ambassador helped *'relaunch'* the programme, embed it into staff practice, and ultimately led to it becoming part of school policy. The June ambassador discussion extended this into a more explicit reflection on the ambassador layer itself as a mechanism of the programme's effectiveness, in contrast to the 'champions' or Youth Sport Trust staff who supported HM in past evaluations. Effectiveness *'depends on who the ambassador is'* and how embedded they already are locally as well as their existing role and skill set; each Ambassador is operating within different circumstances and from different experiences. Where existing relationships exist, initial contact and engagement are easier. This is a significant finding for this research question, suggesting that the support side of the settings-plus-home model depends partly on the relational infrastructure around delivery, and not only on the content of the programme itself, and linked with this year's quantitative finding that respondents felt far more positive about HM's effect on internal staff perception (61% agreeing) than on collaboration between settings and organisations (32% agreeing), suggests that there is scope for local networks to support/ enhance delivery.

One Ambassador's reflections suggests that developing relationships is integral to onboarding and training approaches. An exemplification is offered including whole-school training at a Primary School (Headteacher, PE Lead, EYFS Lead, midday assistants and KS1 staff together), team-teaching and mentoring of Early Career Teachers at another Primary, and peer-led champion network sessions. Both Tower Hamlets and Islington report persistent local authority unresponsiveness as a structural barrier, with multiple emails to LA representatives *'received absolutely no response'* — sharpening the contrast with Southwark, where reflections confirm that because *'the role of the Healthy Movers Ambassador now sits with a member of the Local Authority Early Years team... reach to the settings is not an obstacle.'*

Southwark's reflections also documents practical incentives supporting the model such as payments towards staff cover costs and travel expenses, and the deliberate strategy of encouraging settings to use HM activities as their focused activity during Ofsted inspections. This paid off at one setting, previously rated 'Inadequate,' which used HM activities (including a scarf activity and a jungle activity) as its focused activity during a re-inspection in February 2026.

The setting's manager later wrote to thank the ambassador, 'how much we benefited from utilising the Healthy Movers resources during our second Ofsted inspection; the children were so engaged and so happy. We now incorporate Healthy Movers in our weekly curriculum planning.'

This is one of the strongest single pieces of evidence anywhere in the evaluation to date for the model translating into sustained, embedded practice.

Set against this, Ambassador reflections also record where the model has struggled operationally this year, for example, infrastructure and space limitations, staffing restructures stalling progress after a lead contact left, and onboarding gaps needing urgent support due to a total lack of staff handover. These sit alongside the home-resource logistical barriers already noted above (lost resources and lack of parental engagement), reinforcing that delivery-side barriers remain a recurring theme across both settings and boroughs.

Evaluation Summary

- The clear contrast this year between the first and second cohorts is itself useful evidence of how HM practice develops over time; next year most settings will be able to consider the breadth of HM engagement including parent and child voice/ transition and disadvantage.
- Ambassador embeddedness within existing local authority structures emerges this year as a significant structural factor behind delivery success (Southwark) versus slower-building trust (Islington, Tower Hamlets); this may be worth reflecting on for future ambassador recruitment and support.
- The near-universal satisfaction recorded in the End of Training Survey (89–98% 'Very good' ratings) mirrors the practitioner accounts of light-touch ambassador visits and demonstration sessions being enough to 'relaunch' HM and embed it into everyday practice and even school policy.
- Bring forward the timing of home resource-bag distribution to the start of the academic year, per the practitioner recommendation in the Networking Sessions data, to maximise the window for home engagement and reduce the current pattern of late-year distribution limiting uptake.
- Family-level impact of the settings-plus-home model is strong but delivery-side barriers (bag-content logistics, uneven parental uptake, and late-year distribution) remain the main constraint on realising the model's full potential.
- Nursery-to-Reception transition practice is well embedded where settings have built HM into daily routine; Reception-to-Year 1 remains comparatively underdeveloped despite emerging good-practice examples, and would benefit from being made a more explicit, resourced strand of the programme going into Year 4.

Interim report produced by Dr Helen Lyndon, CREC, July 2026.