

My Best course - Rating the environment

20 October 2014 by Hannah Crown

A course using the US-devised Environment Rating Scales for quality prompted Priya Dhanda, deputy manager of LEYF's Noah's Ark in Tower Hamlets, to reorganise her setting.



Ms Dhanda said the ITERS system led to a reorganisation of the setting and had improved children's behaviour

Environment Rating Scales are used to chart the quality of a child's environment. There are four, each designed for a different age group. The course, delivered by A+ Education on behalf of Tower Hamlets Council, covered the Infant-Toddler Environment Rating Scale (birth to 30 months) and the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (30 months to five years).

The scales provide a snapshot of provision on a particular day, evaluating quality through a comprehensive rating system. They apply in early years settings and schools, out-of-school provision and childminders, and are based on 43 items organised into seven sub-scales covering space and furnishings, personal care, routines, listening and talking, activities, interaction, programme, structure, parents and staff. Each area is given a grade.

The course was held over four days. A day's training was followed by a day in an external nursery where four course attendees were invited to apply the scoring systems. The remaining two days were used for evaluation and further training. This included 'overviews on how to work out and the grading correctly. We watched videos of nursery staff to highlight a particular scale, for example resources or interactions, and gave a grade on each,' she says.

Ms Dhanda said the system led to a reorganisation of the setting and had improved children's behaviour. She said, 'I completely reviewed our baby rooms. We needed some more child-height displays as not enough were at the children's eye level.

'We also ensured things like musical instruments were put in the right sections - previously these had been in a cosy area, and the guidelines say a noisy area should be near the outside area. We changed the furniture layout in the baby rooms and changed the upstairs area. Children are more involved in activities as a result.'

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