

OVO Foundation supports projects tackling educational inequality with £240,000 funding

- [OVO Foundation](#) invests £240,000 in a portfolio of projects tackling educational inequality among children.
- *'When I Grow Up'* seeks to close the educational inequality gap for disadvantaged children by supporting the start of a child's life.
- This marks an exciting step for OVO Foundation as it expands support for projects tackling the crucial early years, and builds on its mission to give young people a better future.
- OVO Foundation will evaluate the projects, ensuring that they contribute to an evidence base which demonstrates what is effective in the early years stage.

London, 30th October 2019 - OVO Foundation, [OVO Energy's](#) charity arm which is part funded by customers, is supporting projects tackling inequality in early education.

OVO Foundation's *'When I Grow Up'* will fund three partners each receiving £80,000 over two years. The specific projects all seek to engage parents and help support children with developing their communication and language. The projects are:

1. **[Doorstep Library](#)**: a weekly reading and book lending service for families in deprived areas in London. Approximately 200 volunteers will be involved to support 300 children, whilst resources will be provided to parents to support children's early development.
2. **[Parental Engagement Network \(PEN\)](#)**: early years practitioners in Trafford and Liverpool will be trained to support parents with their child's literacy and school readiness. OVO Foundation previously funded [PEN's project to deliver Engaging Parents Effectively](#) in Liverpool.
3. **[Tales Toolkit](#)**: Over 50 practitioners will help develop children's language, literacy and socio-emotional skills through play-based storytelling, while supporting over 100 parents in Newham (London), Rochdale and Stockport, so that families can use the resources at home too.

The evidence on the causes of the widening inequality gap for disadvantaged children is clear; it begins at the start of a child's life when they are learning to communicate and develop their vocabulary. Significantly lower educational outcomes for children from disadvantaged backgrounds is already evident by the time they begin school, aged 5. Over the next 11 years of full-time education, it worsens¹. By supporting projects which

¹ Education Endowment Foundation (2018) *The Attainment Gap // 2017*. Available at: https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Annual_Reports/EEF_Attainment_Gap_Report_2018_-_print.pdf

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break this cycle, OVO Foundation hopes to help children overcome educational inequality so that they can have the best possible future.

OVO Foundation will also work with the [Institute for Employment Studies \(IES\)](#), the [Sutton Trust](#) and Professor Kathy Sylva from the University of Oxford to advise the projects on their monitoring and evaluation, helping to build evidence for early years literacy interventions.

Gaby Sethi, Head of OVO Foundation, commented:

“We’re delighted to be supporting a new portfolio of projects to address the educational inequality gap. The evidence suggests that investment in early years and the home learning environment can make the biggest difference so we’re looking forward to supporting three inspiring and impactful projects that help equip parents and caregivers to be their children’s first teacher. We’re also investing in evaluation and impact management and look forward to sharing evidence with others in the sector at the end of the two years.”

OVO Foundation is supported by 60,000+ OVO Energy customers who donate each month by adding at least 25p to their monthly statement. OVO Energy matches all customer donations doubling the power of what we can achieve together.

Ends

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Educational inequality is a key area of focus for OVO Foundation. OVO Foundation has supported a number of projects which help level the playing field. For example;

- OVO Foundation have worked with [Ablaze](#) since 2016 to provide approximately 50 primary school mentors from OVO who help children with their literacy and numeracy across two primary schools in Bristol. OVO Foundation has also funded breakfast clubs in these two schools, equal to 22,800 breakfasts per year.
- OVO Foundation funded [Energy Sparks](#) in 2017, which teaches primary school children in Bath about energy to help reduce schools’ energy consumption and save money.
- OVO Foundation hold monthly [Coder Dojo](#) coding clubs for children aged 7 to 17 led by OVO volunteers in our office. Since January 2019 alone, 13 employees have supported 43 young coders.
- OVO Foundation have worked with various education-focused projects through our [OVO Gives Back initiative](#), including holding a taster session with [Depaul](#) on careers in coding and working with [Centrepoint](#) to support young people who have missed out on formal education opportunities to engage in a Digital Arts Programme.



- OVO Foundation have supported the [Parental Engagement Network](#) (PEN) in Liverpool since 2018, where they have worked with 9 early years practitioners and more than 180 children. They will now join the 'When I Grow Up' portfolio of projects to expand their activity in Liverpool and begin working in Trafford.

About OVO Foundation

OVO Foundation is OVO Energy's charity. It was created in 2014 to expand OVO Energy's charitable giving and bring caring closer to home. We help smart charitable organisations tackle three of the most complex social problems of our time: youth homelessness, educational inequality, and access to energy. At the heart of it all is our mission to give young people a better future. We're not after short-term fixes. It's all about long-term change. And we don't just give money. Our Foundation team commits months of research to seeking out and developing innovative projects that will make the biggest impact. Over 60,000 OVO Energy customers choose to donate to OVO Foundation each month by adding at least 25p to their monthly statement. OVO Energy matches all customer donations, and also covers OVO Foundation's overheads so 100% of donations go directly to the projects.

About Doorstep Library

Doorstep Library is a literacy charity that believes in the power of words to take children places, not just in their imagination, but in their lives. We want to see a world where all children can thrive in homes in which books are celebrated and a love of reading is embraced. With one in four 11 year olds leaving primary school unable to read or write properly, we recruit and train volunteers to go into some of the most disadvantaged areas in London to help introduce young children (aged 0-11 years) to the pleasure of reading. Doorstep Library's unique home-based service means we are there in person, finding the most appropriate books for every child we visit, and building a relationship with the whole family. Our projects not only improve literacy and confidence in children, but they increase family wellbeing and bonding through the joy of sharing stories. This kind of tailored support enables us to help prepare children for school and broaden their opportunities in life.

About Parental Engagement Network (PEN)

PEN is a social enterprise based in Trafford. We are committed to working in partnership with others to establish affordable sources of support for schools and settings. With over 30 years' experience in creating and supporting inclusive learning communities, we provide training, information and networking opportunities for staff and parents; develop creative sustainable resources; and link with other organisations to share effective practice.

About Tales Toolkit

Story is a super powerful learning gizmo. Award winning Tales Toolkit provides interactive, child-led resources aimed at early years, all using four easy-to-remember symbols representing story structure. Tales Toolkit's innovative resources allow teachers to facilitate group sessions where children are given independence to create and write stories using anything to hand. The emphasis is on following the children's lead, and creating a fun and welcoming atmosphere that allows children to explore their own ideas. Resources are provided to schools with online training and support for teachers and practitioners, impacting many areas of learning. Evaluation from Goldsmiths, University of London demonstrated the impact of Tales Toolkit on language and communication, literacy, creativity, social skills, problem solving, and showed a narrowing of the gender gap in early years literacy, all with little or no planning involved for the teacher!