

Collaboration for Improvement in

Communication Friendly Environments

Julie Barrie, Alison Gooding, Arlene Goodwin, Blake Killeen, Carol McGregor

All children should have access to environments which foster, support and develop their speech, language and communication (SLC) skills. The early years are a critical period in a child's life for learning these skills, and Early Childhood Centres (ECCs) have important roles in helping these develop. Evidence shows that positive action in the early years plays a key role in supporting language development and reducing the attainment gap. Communication Friendly Establishment accreditation recognises ECCs that show a commitment to, and can evidence good practice in, promoting the development of SLC skills.

Aim: Onthank ECC will achieve the 5 foundations of the communication friendly environment by April 2019

Our Primary Drivers

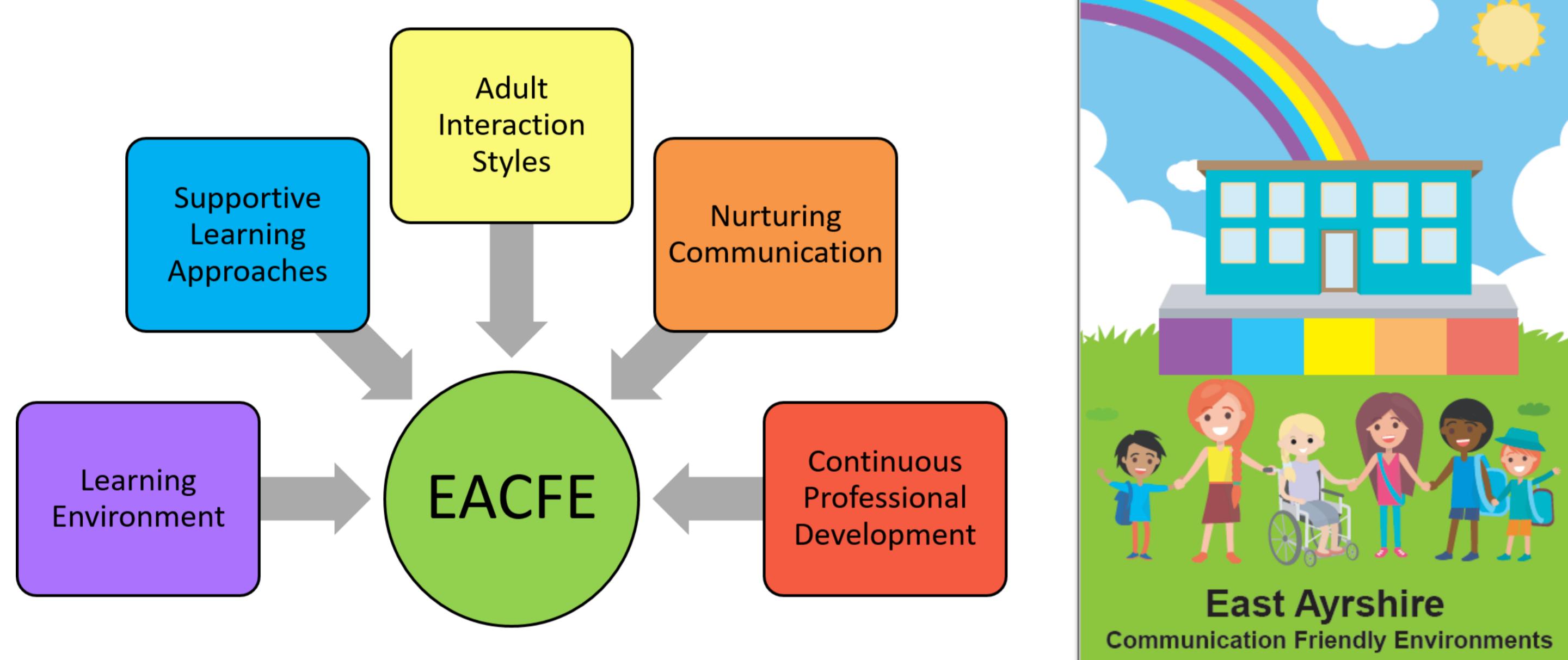


Method

Our LML core team includes an SLT, an Early Years Development Officer, an Educational Psychologist and a Early Learning and Childcare Practitioner/Communication Champion. Our priority is ensuring ECCs are communication friendly and building confidence and capability in ECC staff. We have developed a Driver Diagram to keep focused on our testing and actions and used the tools and information from the Practicum. We have tested our Framework document and developed guidance together with a process map for accreditation.

Process Change

The framework is divided into 5 foundations, each considered to be essential in encouraging, supporting and developing all children's speech, language and communication skills.



Achievements

Our progress is underpinned by the positive and enduring relationships we have developed as we work collaboratively across services together with excellent leadership buy-in and support. The development of the framework has been tested in multiple ECCs by a range of qualified practitioners and refined based on feedback. The team visited other areas to refine knowledge around Communication friendly environments. The guidance has been developed collaboratively together with the process map for accreditation. In addition, the enthusiasm for this project from practitioners and management means that spread plans have now been progressed to all ECC's across East Ayrshire with strategic support from the head of education in East Ayrshire. This work will also be presented to councillors at a local cabinet meeting for endorsement in October.

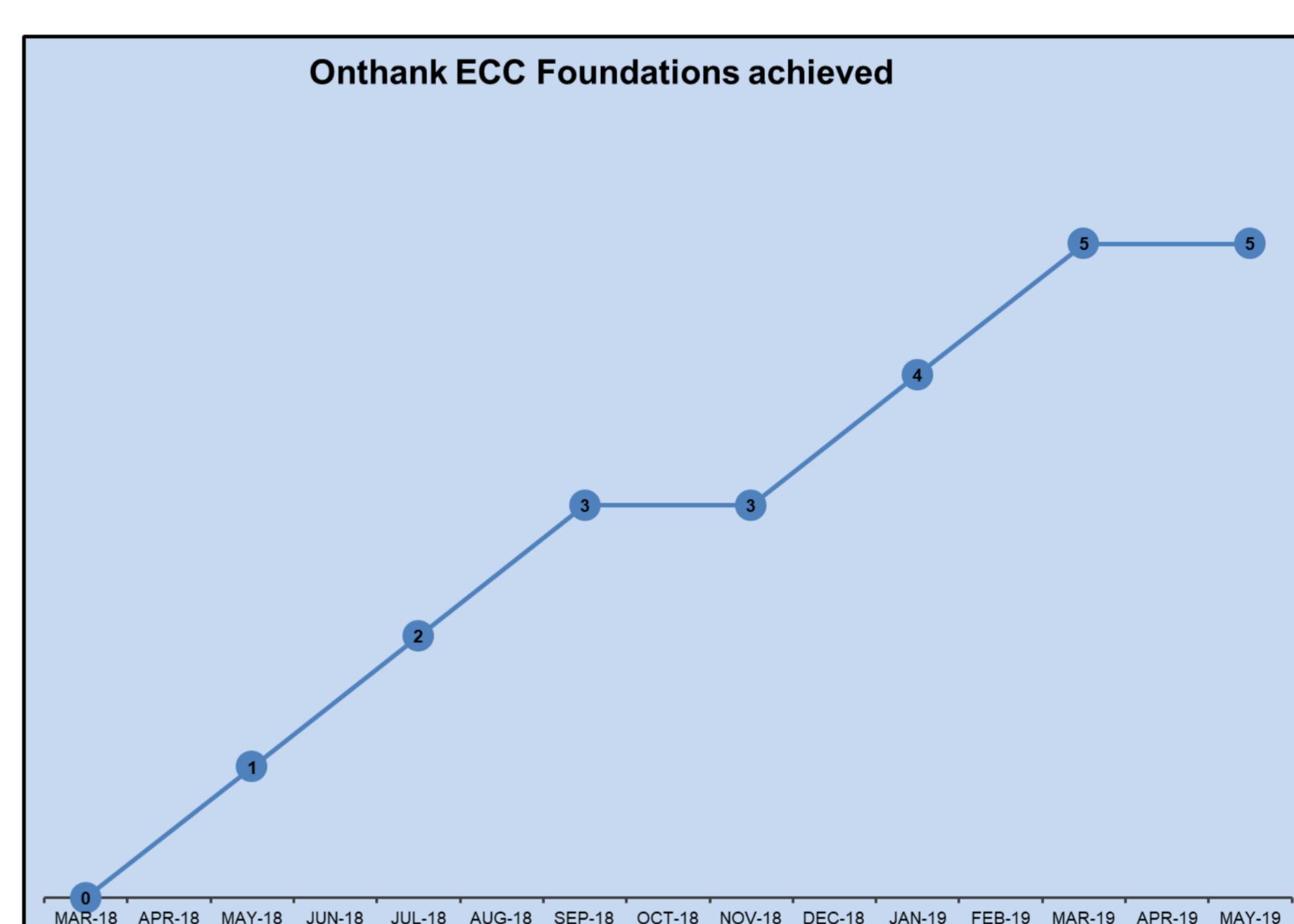


Key Learning Points

A key factor that is important for accreditation is that the ECC has an active communication champion and the 'active' criteria are tracked based on monthly data returns. In addition, our Early Years LML team is working with the LML SAC team. Both teams work collaboratively to ensure there is a cohesive strategy and the frameworks have the same foundations. The importance of true collaboration and the need to start small and to continually gather data to show progress towards the aim have been central to the success of this project.

Results

Onthank ECC had their accreditation visit in May 2019 and became the first establishment in East Ayrshire to be awarded communication friendly status. The trained accreditation team used the framework which had been devised and tested as part of their observations and discussions. The active communication champion in the ECC along with other staff and management presented significant evidence of the valuable, exciting and challenging journey they had gone on to work towards this status. The evidence produced clearly showed the improvement journey which the establishment had undertaken with various tests of change being shared and data being tracked.



Conclusions

The improvement journey undertaken by the team has allowed the development and refinement of core skills required to ensure communication friendly accreditation. Onthank ECC has progressed towards being a fully accredited communication friendly environment. Based on the work carried out in Onthank ECC, we are confident that there are a number of other establishments that will be able to participate in the accreditation process commencing in August 2019, allowing us to scale and spread the success of the work. Our successful Communication Champions project is part of our overall programme around speech, language and communication, working towards communication friendly environments in all ECCs

Scale / Spread

Framework/materials for establishments who are interested will be presented on GLOW, however a folder with all the necessary materials will be provided to any establishment that agree to take part in the process and has signed the contract that has been developed.

At present there are 6 other ECC's who have signed their communication friendly contract and are beginning their journey working towards becoming communication friendly establishments. This is fully supported as an East Ayrshire initiative and a priority moving forward.

Let's see this embedded in our schools and ECCs, and make this work - because the people that will benefit are ourselves and our young people.
So let's do it!

Linda McAulay-Griffiths
Head of Education,
East Ayrshire Council

