

# Collaboration for Improvement in Supporting Early Intervention and Prevention in Talking and Listening Skills

Authors: Fiona Bradley, Class Teacher, Lyndsey Mulholland, Speech and Language Therapist, Dr Kelton Green, Educational Psychologist, Vivian Boxall, Health Improvement Manager



Children have the 'right to give their opinion and be listened to' and be given the chance to develop language skills that will support their literacy development and help them form healthy relationships. There is clear evidence of a persistent gap in attainment between pupils from the richest and poorest households in Scotland. This gap starts in preschool years and continues throughout primary and secondary school. In most cases, it widens as pupils progress through the school years. Most importantly, the poverty attainment gap has a direct impact on school-leaver destinations and thus the potential to determine income levels in adulthood. To address this gap South Lanarkshire children's services partnership has focused on breaking the intergenerational cycle around deficit of language. Theory of change : Providing a targeted language intervention for Primary 1 children within an area of high deprivation will improve language skills and in turn close the poverty related attainment gap.

**Aim: By February 2019, targeted children will have an average 20% increase in age equivalent scores on Information and Grammar following intervention for expressive language.**

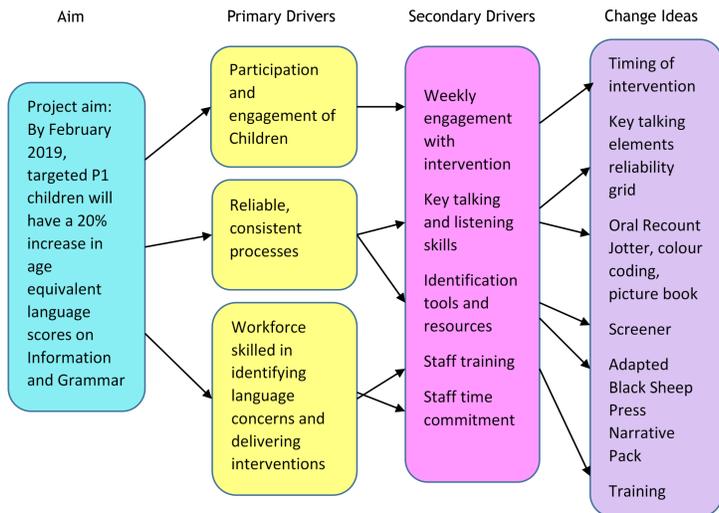
## Method

A collaboration was established across staff from Beckford Primary, South Lanarkshire Council Psychological Services and Speech and Language Therapy. Our team received training in Improvement Methodology as part of the Language meets Literacy Practicum.

We utilised a range of different improvement tools, including a force-field analysis, a driver diagram and PDSA cycles. We developed a picture stimulus book, a screening tool and adapted the Black Sheep Press Narrative programme into an intensive 14 week course based on the Black Sheep Press Narrative which was delivered x3 per week and carried over onto classroom activities.

We used outcome, process and balancing measures to provide feedback around the changes we had observed, these included: % increase in age equivalent months for expressive language, % weekly engagement, % of key talking elements in weekly news recall (Who, What, Where, What Happened, When) and Time taken by the teacher. Three targeted groups received the intervention within Beckford Primary School.

## Process Change



We considered the primary and secondary drivers and focused on the screening tool, adapting session plans for targets, feedback meetings in school and LML team meetings.

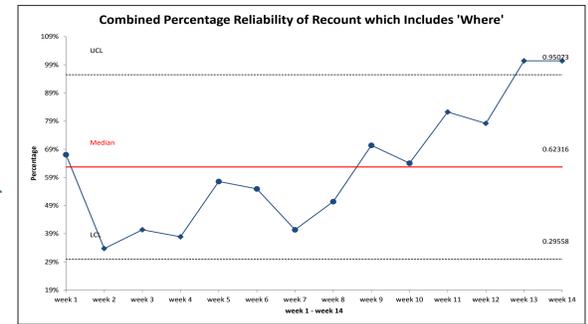
## Key Learning Points

- Improvement methodology has enabled us to identify what really makes the difference in helping to break the intergenerational cycle of deprivation.
- Protecting time- to collaborate, to plan, to adapt, to reflect. We needed more of this than originally anticipated in order to fine tune the process measures.
- Change bundle- Primary 1 language screener, Black sheep press Narrative pack, Key Talking elements tracker, training pack and Picture Scenario Book.
- Our run charts provided quick and easy feedback and helped maintain momentum.
- We improved multi-agency working, and provided greater access to Universal and Targeted approaches for children.
- The colour coding for the key elements has been integrated into the whole school writing programme.

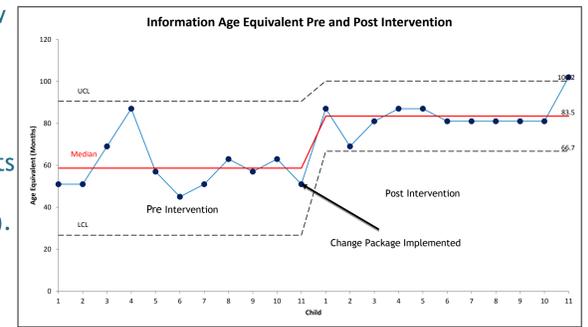


## Results

The results for the three cohorts were combined. The most marked improvement in process measures was for the use of 'where' in children's oral recounts. A notable increase in children's use of this key element was evidenced, with improvement from week 7.



Outcome measure :The Renfrew Action Picture Test was used to assess the children's expressive language before and after the intervention. Significant improvements in age equivalents in months were seen for both Information and Grammar (41%). This exceeded our aim and closed the gap for 91% of the Children.



Overall, the consistency of children's attendance was good. Occasionally sessions were missed due to illness or lack of cover for the class teacher. Implementing this intervention required assessment time of four hours, resource preparation of four hours and 1½ hours per week.

## Achievements

- The children made significant gains in both their receptive and expressive language scores on standardised assessments; closing the gap for 91%.
- Children displayed more confidence in the classroom environment following the intervention.
- We reassessed the 5 children in the first cohort one year later and they maintained the gains, providing evidence for sustained improvement.

Pre language sample: "She's glasses broked. She's fallen down the stairs"

Post language sample: "The girl fell down the stairs and broke her glasses"

## Conclusions

The children in all of the groups showed significant improvements in both information content and grammar score on the Renfrew Action Picture Test. We exceeded our aim of an average 20% increase in age equivalent scores, with children achieving average increases of 41%.

The skills the children have developed have already transferred onto other areas of the curriculum, particularly within literacy.



## Spread/Scale

The next phase will be to spread to four identified schools within the same SIMD classification across South Lanarkshire. The LML team is expanding to include additional local champions to support this.